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best from
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Madsen play in
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Auto III?



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ISSUE #116 JUN 2002

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Assemble and control a party of up to eight heroes as you battle your way through the expansive 3D fantasy world of Ehb. In this action packed adventure, you and your party of fighters, archers and sorcerers will embark on a quest to take revenge on the evil that has engulfed your land. Whether you're playing alone or in multiplayer mode, you will seamlessly journey from the highest mountains and deepest dungeons, to enormous castles and secret underground lairs without experiencing a single loading screen. Seek out and destroy the source of the evil uprising that has torn the Kingdom of Ehb apart and victory will be yours. **An epic adventure unfolds...**

A Role-Playing Game from Chris Taylor



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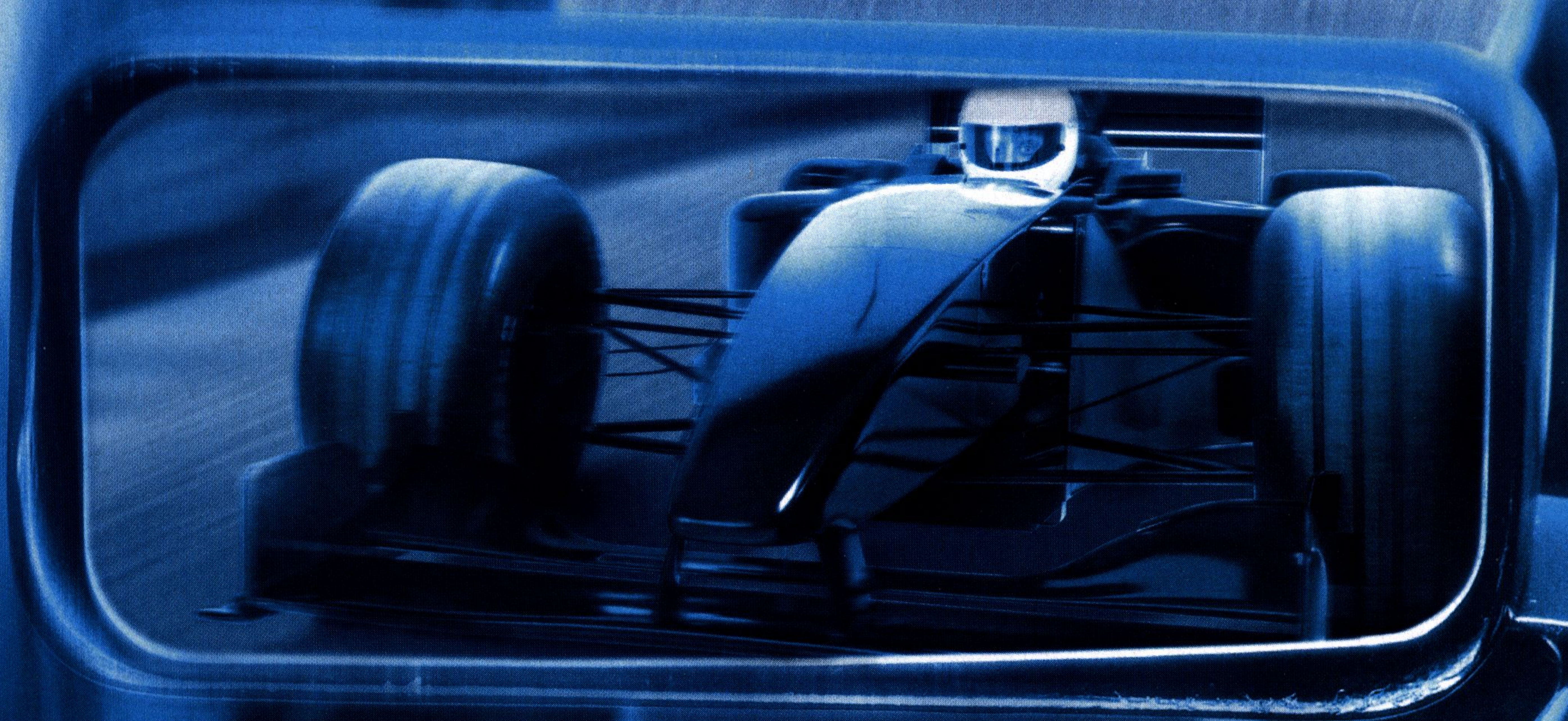
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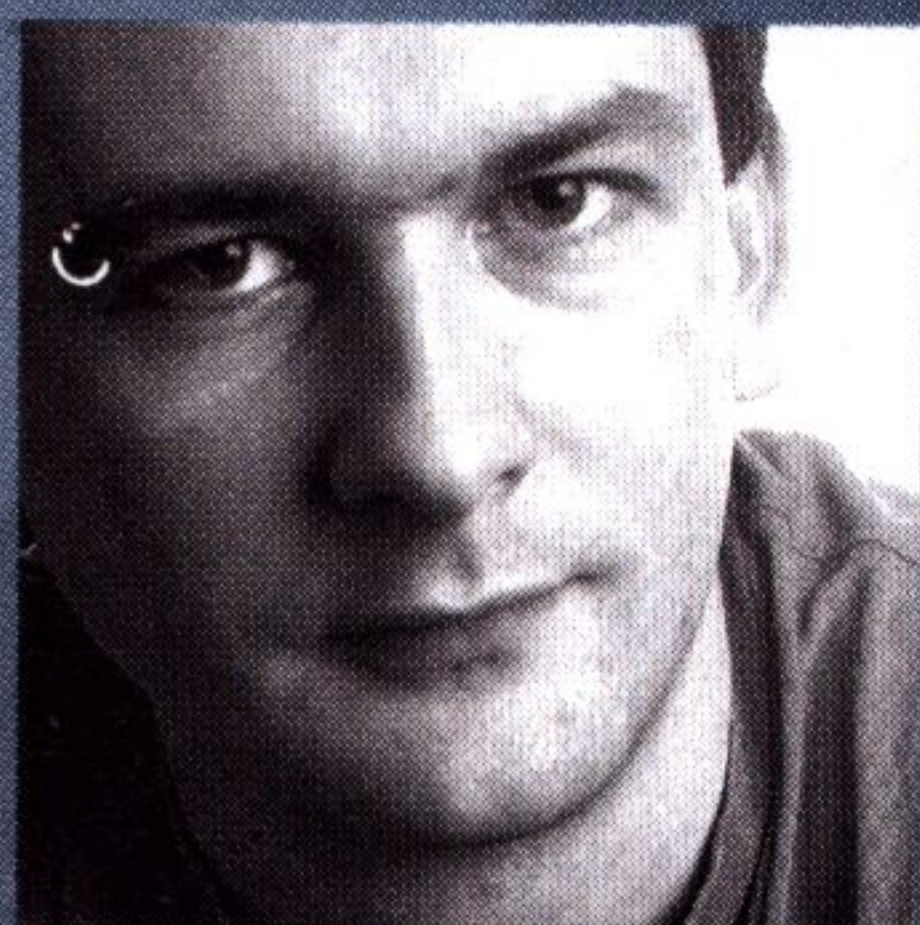
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GEOFF CRAMMOND'S
GRAND PRIX 4

www.grandprixgames.com

Respect your elders



It's a question I've been asked over and over again. Why does a forward-thinking PC magazine dedicate so much of its coverage to Retro games and features? Admittedly we've always seen progress within this industry as its single most important factor, rewarding originality and scorning

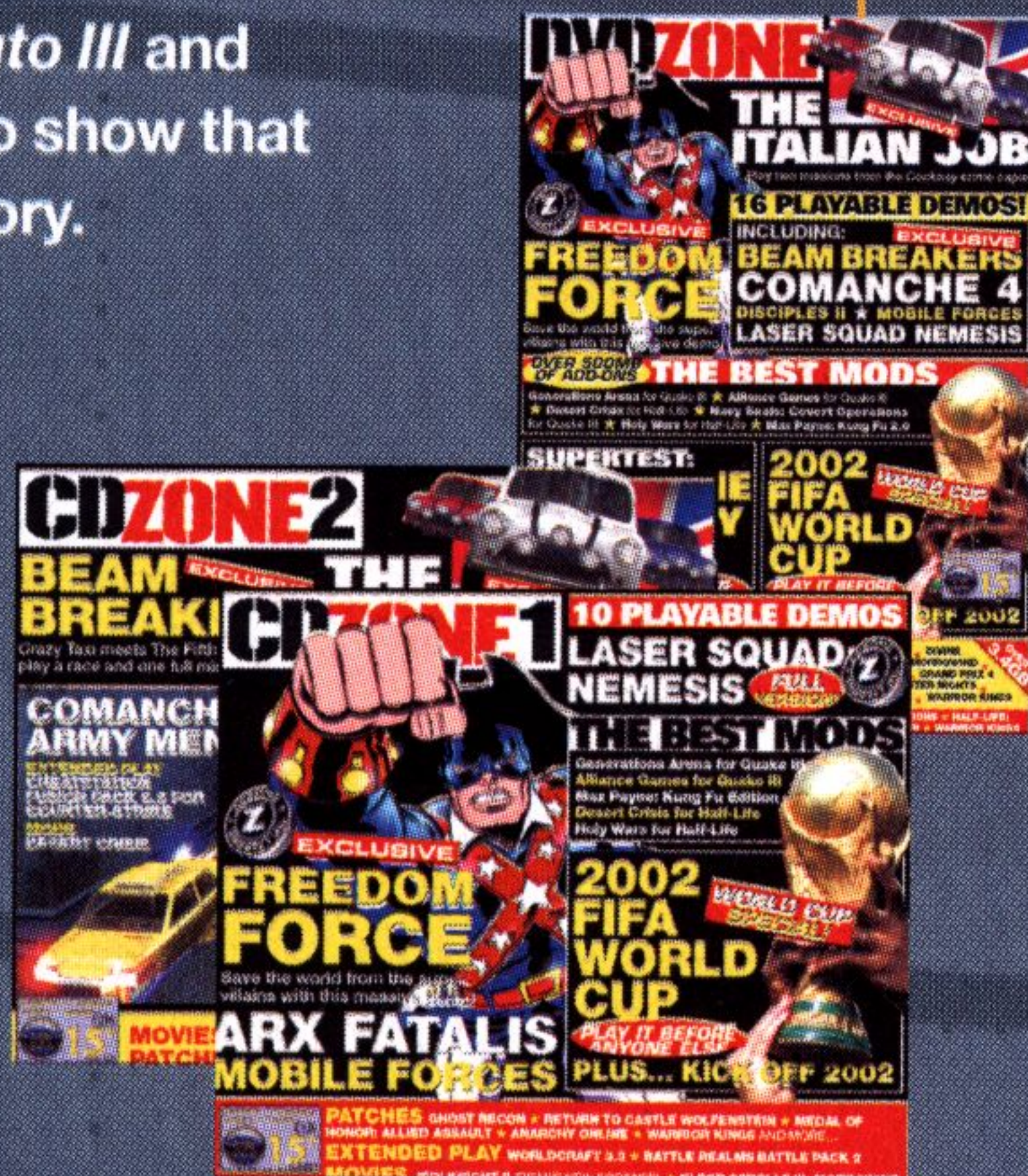
shameless rehashes of tried and tested formulas. But it's important that we don't forget our gaming heritage. After all, you can't appreciate the complexities of a Picasso without studying a few cave paintings first. Likewise, to truly appreciate the strides made by developers over the last few years, it makes sense to look back and compare what we have now and what we had then.

But it doesn't just stop at nostalgia and a warm inner sense of smugness at how much better games are today. Our Games That Changed The World series gives an insight that no preview or review ever could. We catch up with developers who are now free and happy to discuss all of the problems they encountered, dish the dirt and share the anecdotes associated with their landmark titles, something they could never have done during their involvement for fear of ending up in a dole queue. What's more, by tracking them down, we find out what these pioneers are doing now, and how their experiences and mistakes from the past are helping them break new ground in the present day. This month, we find out how *Command & Conquer* changed the strategy genre forever. Head to page 142 to find out more.

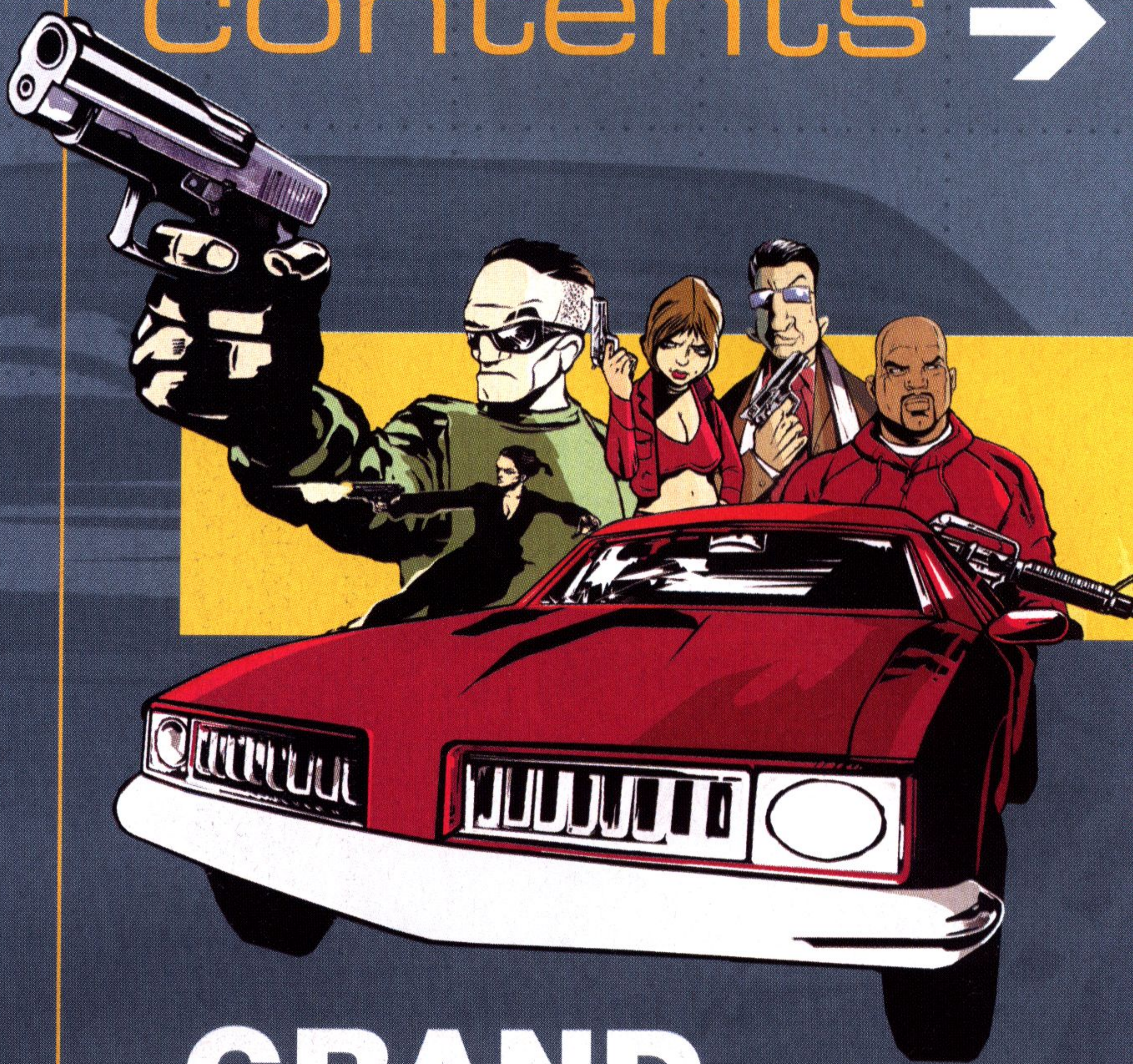
Another opportunity to re-evaluate the past can be found at the Game On exhibition at the Barbican in London. Featuring the past, present and future of games, it's the biggest exhibition dedicated to the history and culture of games ever staged. You'll find full details about it on page 18. We've been along to have a look, and can wholeheartedly recommend it to you all. If you get a chance, go along. Like our Retro features, it'll certainly make you appreciate the games you're playing now that little bit more.

But looking back is, of course, just one part of what we're all about. This issue we bring you two exclusive previews, the stunning *Grand Theft Auto III* and *Medieval: Total War*, which just goes to show that the future has as much to offer as history.

Dave Woods
Editor



contents →



GRAND THEFT AUTO III P40

WE GET TO GRIPS WITH THE STUNNING THIRD OUTING OF EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE CRIME GAME – BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T TRULY PLAYED IT UNTIL YOU'VE PLAYED IT ON THE PC

COVER DISCS P126

11 PLAYABLE DEMOS INCLUDING...

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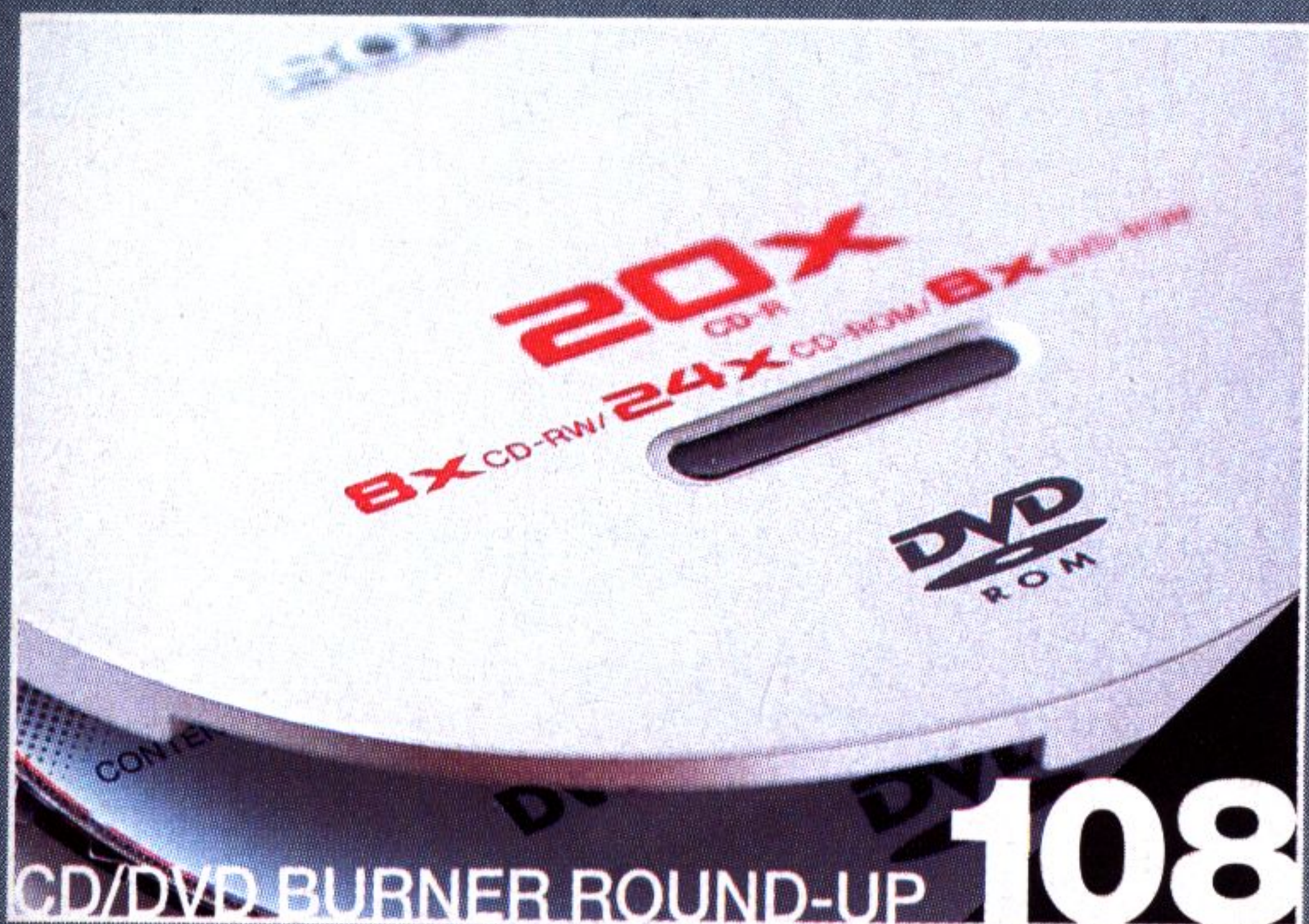
■ **DVD Exclusive:** DVD Zone Essentials and the best RTS demos from this month's Supertest games.

■ **Contents** differ between the CDs and the DVD. Check the disc pages for more details



SUPERTEST

96



CD/DVD BURNER ROUND-UP

108



HOTSHOTS

30

BULLETIN

- 8 **LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS**
LARA'S BACK WITH A FEW NEW SURPRISES UP HER BRA
- 10 **SPLINTER CELL**
FIRST LOOK AT THIS GORGEOUS METAL GEAR SOLID BEATER
- 12 **SIMCITY 4**
SIMCITY GOES FORTH
- 30 **HOTSHOTS**
ALL-NEW SCREENSHOTS FOR UT 2003

FEATURES

- 32 **THE EVOLUTION OF ONLINE GAMING**
CHARTING THE TIMELINE OF INTERNET GAMING
- 142 **GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD**
A LOOK BACK AT THE GAME THAT REVOLUTIONISED THE STRATEGY GENRE, COMMAND & CONQUER



MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

58

HARDWARE

- 104 **NEWS**
PROCESSOR PRICES PLUMMET
- 112 **DEAR WANDY**
HE'S A TECHNO WIZARD
- 114 **WATCHDOG**
YOU MOAN, WE MAKE OTHERS LISTEN
- 108 **HARDWARE ROUND-UP**
CD AND DVD BURNERS

EXTENDED PLAY

- 122 **THE GUIDE**
SECOND PART OF WANDY'S GUIDE TO STOPPING CHEATS
- 124 **MODSQUAD**
THE BEST NEW MODS REVIEWED
- 126 **DISC PAGES**
- 131 **FIGHT CLUB**
TRY YOUR LUCK ONLINE AGAINST THE PC ZONE TEAM
- 132 **MAILBOX**
YOUR VIEWS AND READER REVIEWS

REAR VIEW

- 136 **THE A-LIST**
YOUR ONE-STOP GAME BUYER'S GUIDE
- 141 **RETROZONE**
A LOOK BACK AT SYNDICATE
- 146 **COMMENT**
HAVE PC DEVELOPERS GONE TYCOON GAME CRAZY?

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THE ITALIAN JOB **70**



REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION **46**



2002 FIFA WORLD CUP **76**

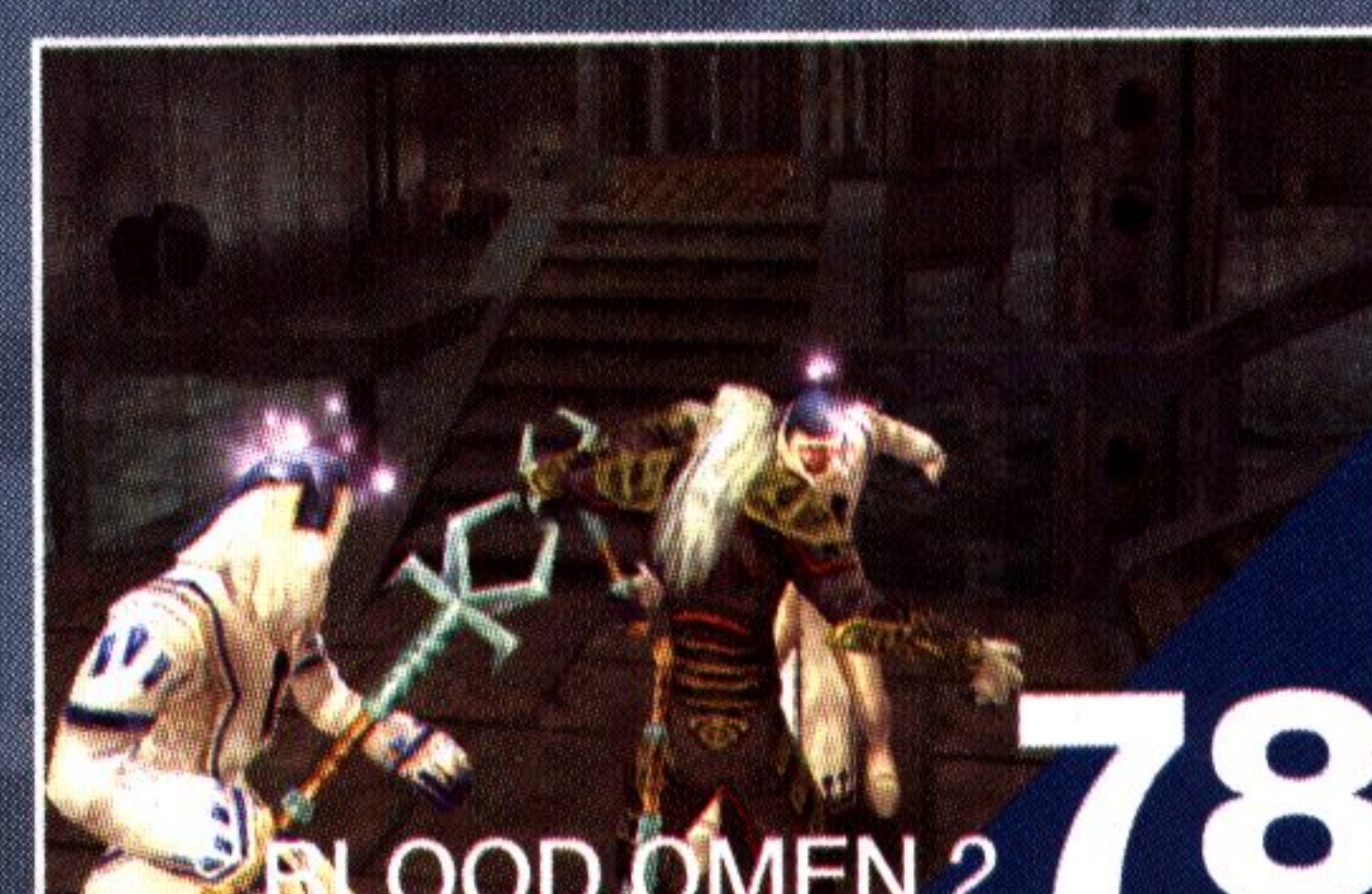
PREVIEWS

- 40 **GRAND THEFT AUTO III**
- 46 **REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION**
- 50 **OPERATION FLASHPOINT: RESISTANCE**
- 52 **THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND**
- 53 **GEOFF CRAMMOND'S GRAND PRIX 4**
- 54 **SHADOWBANE**
- 56 **BEAM BREAKERS**
- 58 **MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR**
- 62 **OI... LIVINGSTONE! WHAT'S YOUR GAME?**

contents

REVIEWS

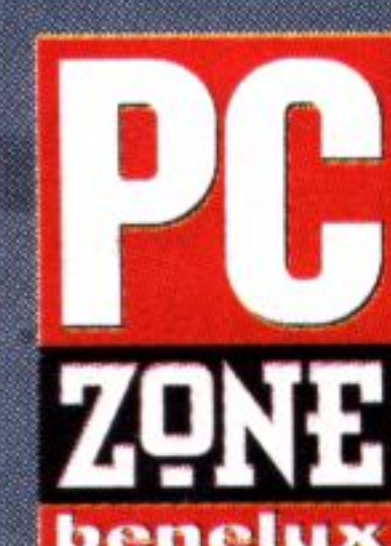
- 70 **THE ITALIAN JOB**
STEAL GOLD AND RACE MINIS
- 74 **GHOST RECON: DESERT SIEGE**
FIRST ADD-ON PACK TO LAST YEAR'S HIT TACTICAL SHOOTER
- 76 **2002 FIFA WORLD CUP**
TAKE PART IN THE WORLD CUP
- 78 **BLOOD OMEN 2**
VAMPIRE-BASED ACTION/ADVENTURE
- 80 **ULTIMA ONLINE: LORD BLACKTHORN'S REVENGE**
LATEST VERSION OF ULTIMA ONLINE
- 81 **WARLORDS BATTLECRY II**
SWORDS AT THE READY
- 84 **THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY**
GET YOUR SIMS AWAY FROM IT ALL
- 86 **HOOLIGANS: STORM OVER EUROPE**
CONTROVERSIAL RTS
- 87 **NASCAR RACING 2002 SEASON**
GET AROUND AND AROUND
- 88 **JANE'S ATTACK SQUADRON**
- 89 **THE SETTLERS IV: THE TROJANS AND THE ELIXIR OF POWER**
- 89 **MOON TYCOON**
- 90 **WAR COMMANDER**
- 90 **MALL TYCOON**
- 91 **IL-2: EASTERN THUNDER**
- 92 **RE-RELEASES**
GAMES AT BARGAIN PRICES
- 94 **UPDATES**
JEDI KNIGHT II, C&C: RENEGADE AND WARRIOR KINGS MULTIPLAYER
- 96 **SUPERTEST**
BATTLE OF THE RTS GAMES



BLOOD OMEN 2 **78**

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Bap from the dead...

LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Core Design

PUBLISHER Eidos

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE

Christmas 2002

WEBSITE www.tombraider.com

IN SUMMARY

Lara's back, and she's not happy. It's an all-new deeper and darker Lara in an adventure that hopes to take the series into brave new territory. Two playable characters, RPG elements and stealth action are in, tomb raiding and block puzzles are out.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

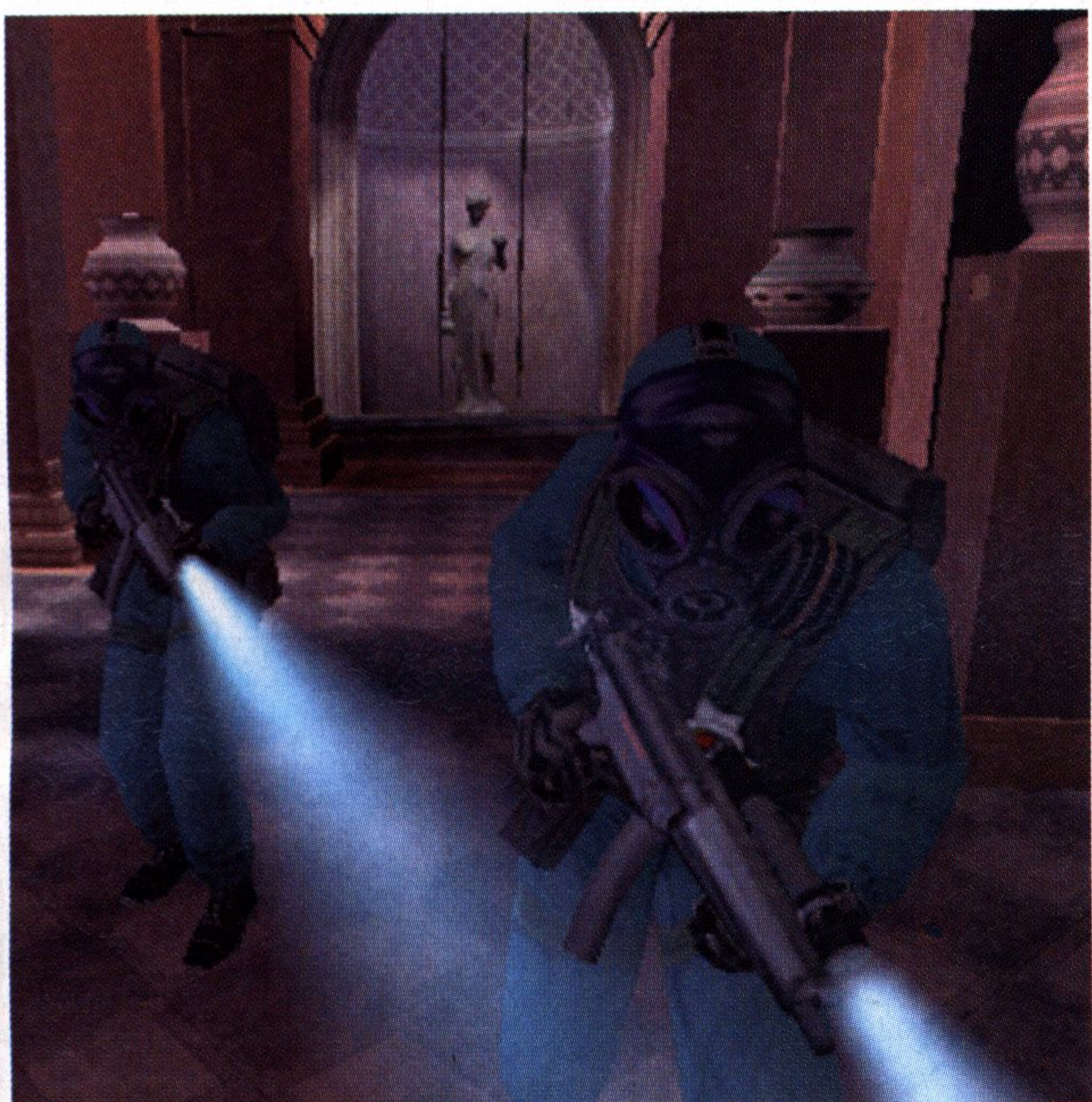
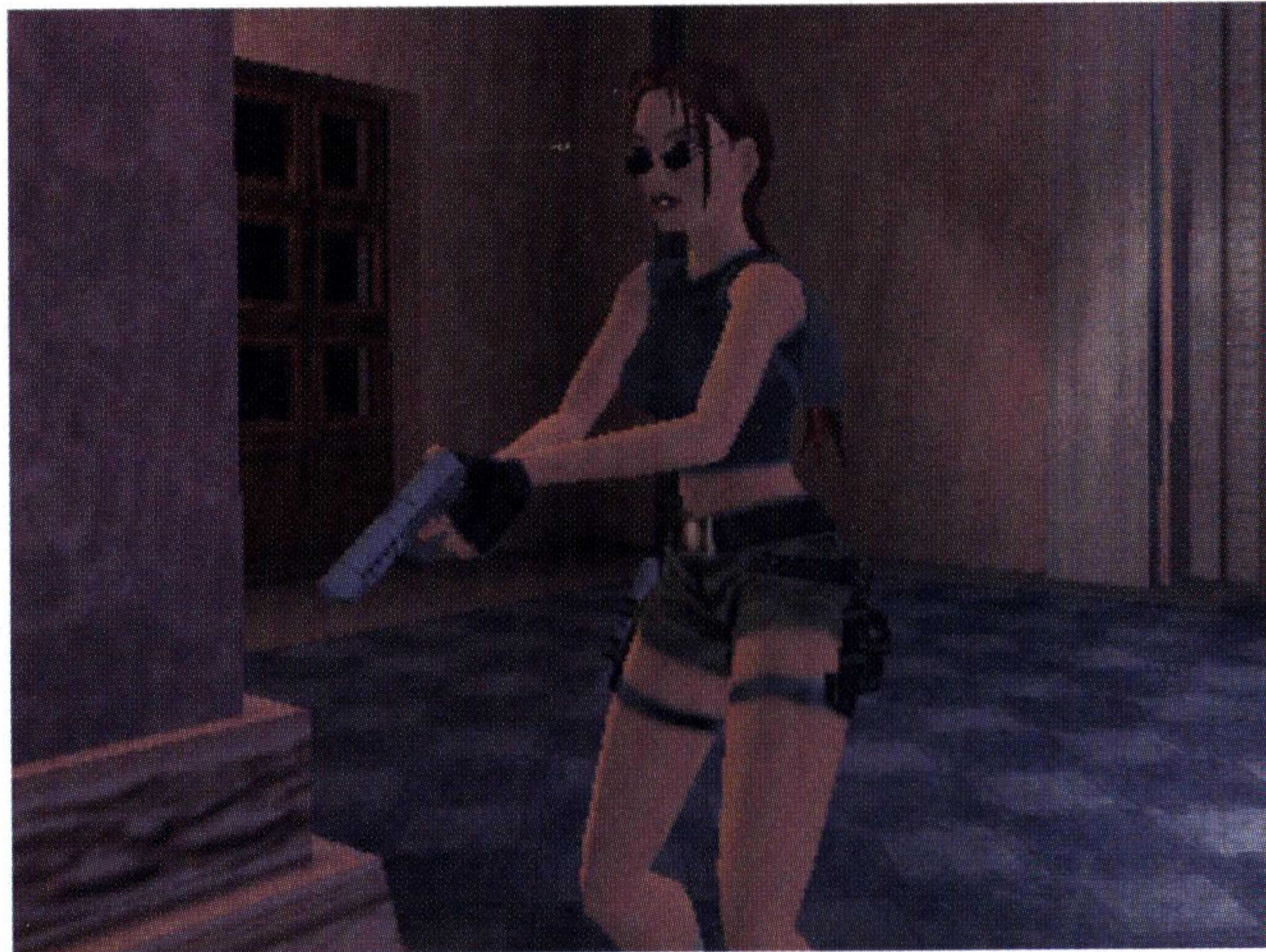
Like her, loathe her, or nurture a secret lust for her virtual baps, Lara's early games helped to define the third-person 3D adventure. With a massive budget, huge expectations and talented creative team, her latest, more mature outing simply can't afford to disappoint.

Lara's back and this time she's well stroppy

■ **NICE RACK** Anthony Holden



In-game footage reveals a strong *Metal Gear Solid 2* influence. A sequence involving a stealthy Lara creeping up on a security guard and cracking his neck is particularly suggestive.



UNLESS YOU'VE been lurking under a bush somewhere in deepest Norrath for the past month or so, chances are you've already heard there's a new Lara game on the way. What's more, your Mum probably has too. Not because it's the biggest game on the calendar or even the most exciting, just because the mainstream media has decided it's still newsworthy, especially if you can tie it in with a few buffed up shots of the latest real-life Ms Croft.

So, *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness*, eh? A suitably non-numerical and Hollywood-friendly mouthful to underline Lara's next-gen superstar status. And it is the next step really, the one we've been waiting for, when Lara finally stops spiralling into sequel hell and gives back some of the loving her fans have lavished on her through countless cross-platform iterations and one distinctly forgettable film.

Luckily, Core seems to be taking its responsibility seriously this time, rethinking both the gameplay and

atmosphere of its flagship franchise at a fairly fundamental level, as well as restyling Lara herself. The results, while a tad predictable, are undeniably appealing.

First of all, the new Lara. Back from a scrape with death, feeling bitter and betrayed, this is a darker and more complex Ms Croft. No longer the blithe young adventuress with a plum in her mouth and a broomstick up her arse, the New Dark Lara (NDL) has no truck with green spandex, block puzzles or even tomb raiding. She's on the run from the law for a murder she didn't commit, and from an ancient and mysterious evil force just for being so goddamn nosy.

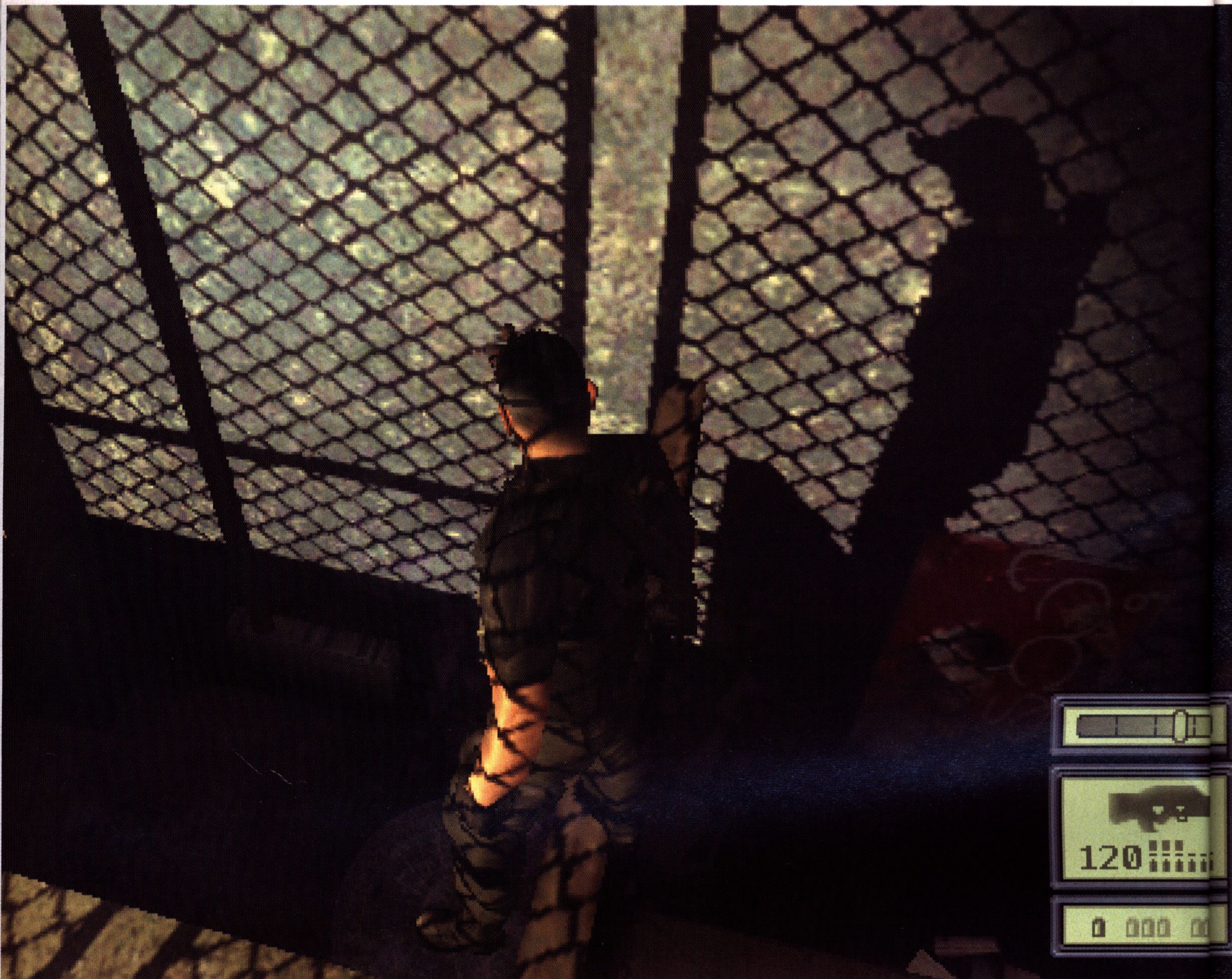
While NDL promises all the agility of old (and probably more), new directions in gameplay promise to give you a degree of control over her mind as well as her body. That is, you'll be able to guide her through conversations with NPCs, choosing a temperament from three possibilities along the lines of friendly, cool or dismissive. A number of highly evolved characters are promised for Lara to interact with, and decisions

made in dealing with them – often involving tough moral choices – will genuinely affect the direction of the game.

While currently being played down in order to keep all eyes on Lara, the other major new feature is the introduction of a second playable character, hardened adventurer Kurtis Trent. How the character switching will work remains unclear, but the possibility of a two-player co-operative mode is all too apparent. What we do know is that together they will pursue sinister art collector Eckhardt through the back streets and subterranean realms of three massive cities, including Paris and Prague. In the process they will run into all sorts of trouble with mystic secrets and ancient conspiracies, and no doubt end up shagging. Either that or Kurtis will get his own spin-off series and Lara will do a karting game. Expect a full preview soon. **EW**

“Back from a scrape with death, feeling bitter and betrayed, this is a darker and more complex Ms Croft”





Metal Gear Samuel

SPLINTER CELL

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft Montreal

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Christmas 2002

WEBSITE www.ubi.com

IN SUMMARY

Stop eyeing up those discount PS2s – the PC's answer to *Metal Gear Solid 2* is here. It's third-person, it's stealth action, and it looks absolutely stunning courtesy of some ultra-tweaked *Unreal* technology. Plus it's a Tom Clancy game, so it's sure to be the most realistic and gritty stealth game yet.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

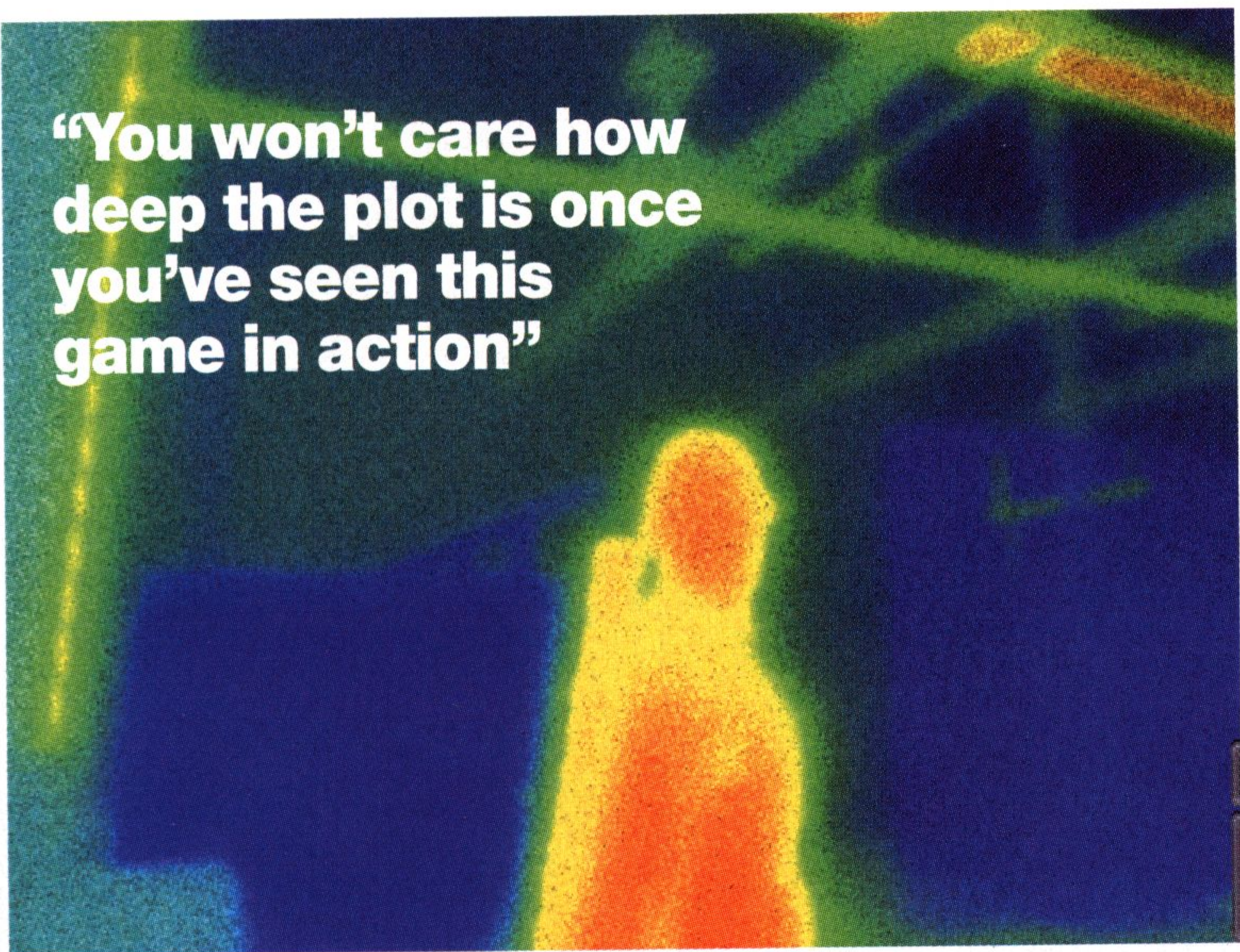
Ubi Soft is setting out with one thing in mind with *Splinter Cell* – to make it the best-looking, best-playing game of 2002. Ambitious it may be, but we've seen it in action and it's definitely super-cool, packed with gadgets and dripping with high-tech espionage atmosphere.

Watch your back Snake – Sam Fisher is coming to redefine stealth action

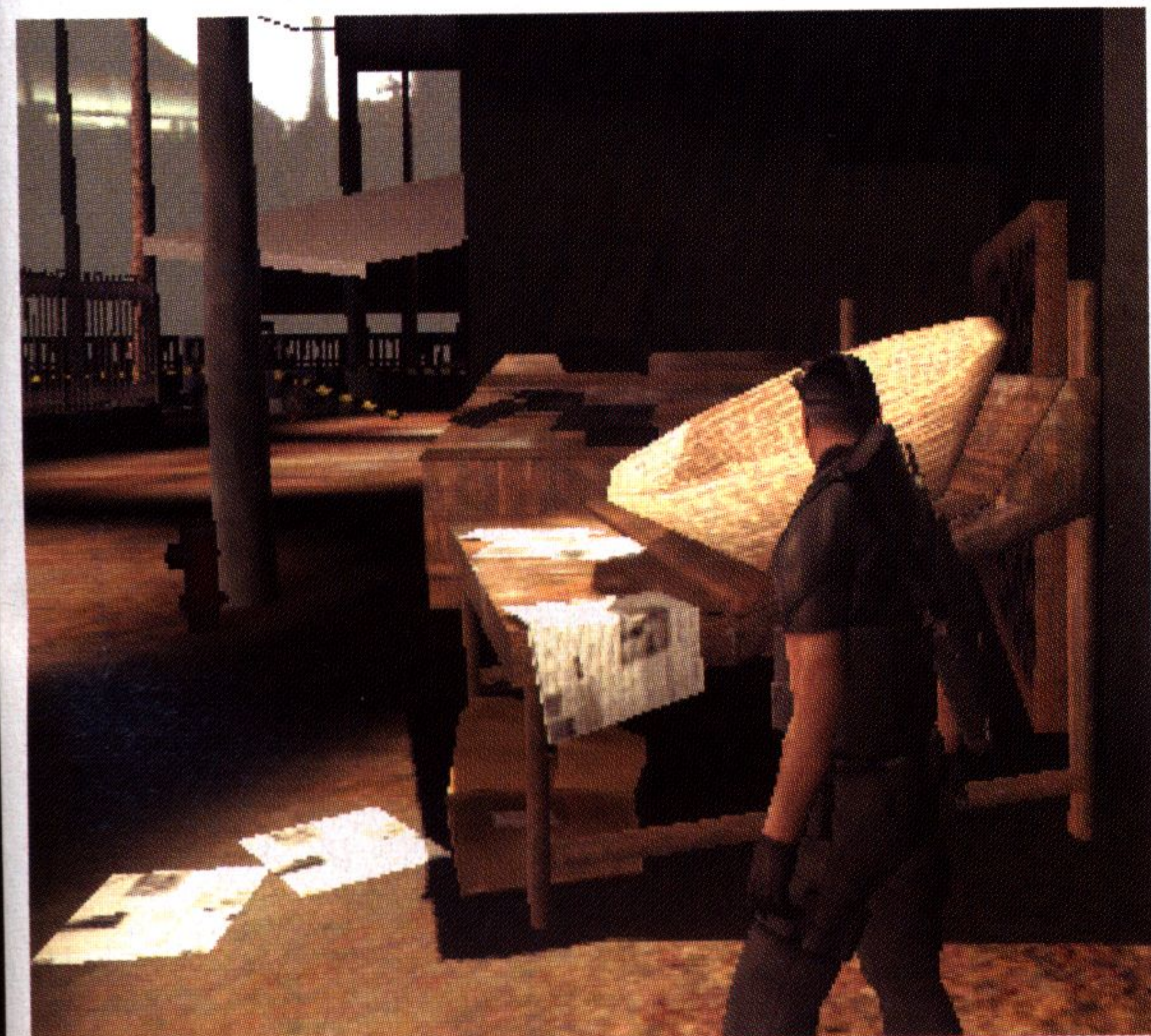
■ **HUMAN SHIELD** Anthony Holden



"You won't care how deep the plot is once you've seen this game in action"



Rather than a long list of redundant guns, Sam carries the F2000 modular weapon system, incorporating assault rifle functionality, integrated laser range finder, light attachment, a 40mm grenade launcher and 'less lethal' weapon systems such as the ring airfoil.



MONTREAL. City of culture. Birthplace of maple syrup eggs, Leonard Cohen, and more recently, *Splinter Cell*, a freshly unveiled stealth action game that threatens to cast the other two claims to fame into insignificance.

It could even be the game that unseats the current stealth supremo, *Metal Gear Solid 2*, of which a PC version remains unforthcoming. It's not a clone of Solid Snake's ventures, but it certainly hangs out at some of the same shadowy bars, along with *Hitman*, *Perfect Dark* and *Thief II*.

The big difference is, this is a Tom Clancy title, which instantly grounds it in an established universe governed by a certain amount of gritty realism. It's no *Rainbow Six* though; in fact it's a new type of Clancy game, one with more in common with films like *Clear And Present Danger* than with other Clancy games. It's third-person stealth in the grand tradition, with an emphasis on day-after-tomorrow technology, espionage, intrigue and politically charged action.

The story kicks off in the Caucasus. Azerbaijan has been invaded by

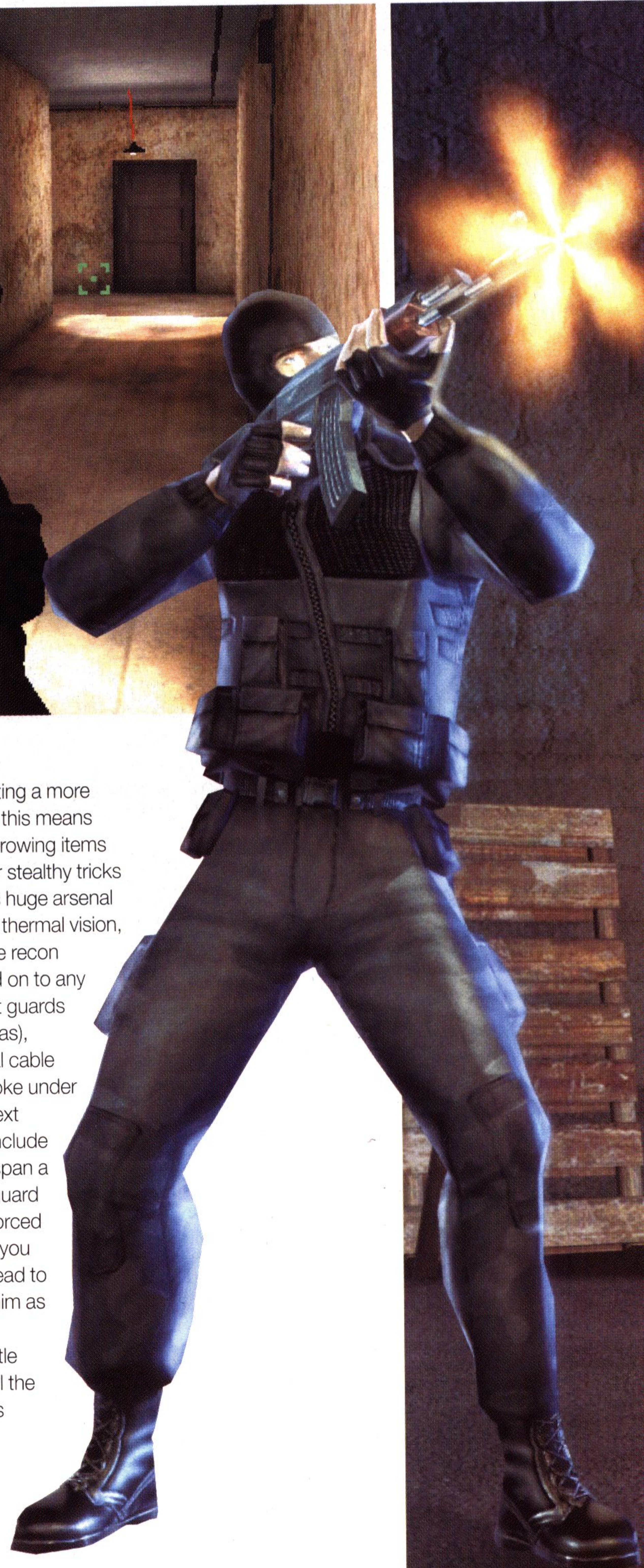
neighbouring Georgia, led by villainous new president Nikoladze. NATO intervenes, prompting Nikoladze to go into hiding. He takes his army underground, scatters them into a terrorist cell formation and prepares to launch a counter-attack against the US using information warfare. Enter Third Echelon, an imaginary NSA sub-agency, and top agent Sam Fisher. His mission: find Nikoladze and scuttle his conspiracy.

Standard spy fare it may be, but you probably won't care how deep the plot is once you've seen this game in action. *Splinter Cell* boasts an enhanced version of the latest *Unreal* engine, with a completely redesigned lighting and special effects system. Like *Doom 3*, fully dynamic lighting means every item in the game casts its own shadows in real time, and Sam even casts shadows on himself. This not only gives the game a hugely atmospheric look, but is perfectly suited to a game based on skulking in the dark, with a *Thief*-like light meter representing Sam's visibility.

Furthermore, an 'interactive world ingredient' system means that every object in the map can be thrown, destroyed or

moved. Apart from creating a more immersive environment, this means you can do things like throwing items to distract guards. Other stealthy tricks come courtesy of Sam's huge arsenal of gadgets: night vision, thermal vision, sticky cam (a tiny remote recon camera that can be fired on to any surface, used to distract guards and even release stun gas), and the very cool optical cable camera (the kind you poke under a door to preview the next room). Special moves include the split jump, used to span a corridor and wait for a guard to walk beneath, and 'forced co-operation', in which you stick a gun to a guy's head to interrogate him or use him as a human shield.

In fact, there's too little space here to tell you all the things we like about this game. Suffice it to say we're excited, and so should you be. **PC**





Back to urbanity...

SIMCITY 4

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Maxis

PUBLISHER EA

EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Late 2002

WEBSITE www.simcity.com

IN SUMMARY

The latest instalment of a legendary series, *SimCity 4* offers more freedom to build anything you want, from a bustling metropolis to a quiet suburban town. The 3D mode that was going to be part of *SimCity 3000* still seems to be sitting on the shelf.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

It's been a long time since we had an excellent city-building god game to toy around with, *Caesar III* being the last and, for most of us, the best. Amazing detail and a total lack of talking, eating, defecating Sims could put the title that started it all back on top.

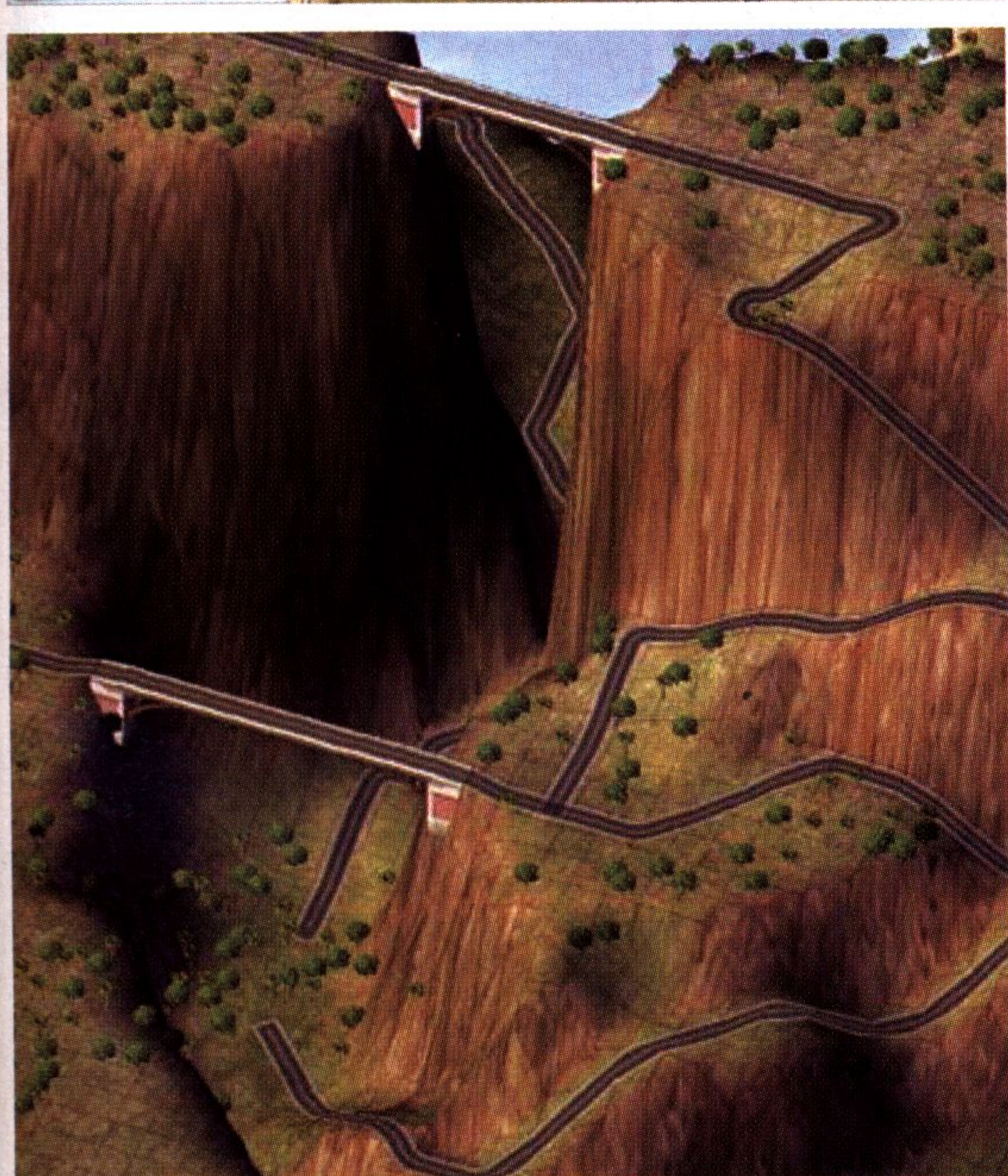
Why pretend to be a nanny when you can be an entrepreneurial god?

■ **DECONSTRUCTING** Mark Hill





You'll have much greater control over the terrain this time round, with cliffs, beaches and ragged hills all available at the click of a button, adding variety to both the aesthetics of your creation and the ecosystem it needs to survive.



WE'D STARTED TO think Maxis couldn't care less anymore. So bloated have they become by the hyper success of *The Sims*, and so busy squeezing it for all it's worth with one anodyne expansion pack after another, that we thought they'd forgotten all about their roots. Remember *SimCity*? The game that started it all for them back in '89? Of course, it was followed by some ridiculous sequels like *SimTower* and *SimSafari*, but it remains a massively influential title.

So, it's good to hear they haven't turned into some sort of gaming McDonald's, doing nothing but churning out *Sims* add-ons for the undiscerning masses (with plenty of cardboard and mouse-shit among the meat). And while Maxis is yet to divulge all the details, it's also clear that *SimCity 4* isn't some sort of souped-up *SimsVille* (that being the aborted title that was going to take *The Sims* to a community-building level).

However, neither does it represent a massive leap forward – at least not

visually – from the last title, *SimCity 3000*, released to general acclaim three years ago. Rather than go for a tricky, and potentially fatal, 3D mode, Maxis has stuck by the isometric view. And that's just the way we like it, especially when you consider all the detail that goes into the game's bustling miniature cities. Buildings now look so real you feel you should be able to walk in and take the elevator to the top floor. Houses have become more personalised, each one growing and evolving separately from the old generic style. Water areas ripple as boats move across them, sending tiny waves towards the coast. Clouds drift above in cotton whirls, while beneath them the colours are alive and bursting off the screen.

MAINTENANCE MAN

All this will mean nothing, though, if the gameplay framework that supports it all isn't up to scratch. I'm not the only one who has grown increasingly frustrated with past titles because of the intense levels of micromanagement required to build a successful city. You can

“Tunnels and bridges will start building themselves without you having to give each and every specific command”

spend hours laying roads and water pipes, and then weeks maintaining and repairing them. While Maxis promise to expand on the options and involvement you have to control everything, there's also talk of agents to help you carry out some of the more menial tasks, and this would definitely be a welcome addition.

A HELPING HAND

We do know that tunnels and bridges will start building themselves without you having to give each and every specific command, leaving you more time to play around with the spectacular and greatly enhanced disasters. You'll now be able to control where these disasters go instead of just watching them destroy random parts of the city. Which is great, for as much as we like building, we like knocking down even more.

Personally, I'll be happy if I can play a *Sim* game without hearing the awful, twittering, moronic squawks the inhabitants speak in. And *SimCity 4* should certainly remind real gamers that there's more to Maxis than glorified dolls. **PCZ**

SPRING
HAS
SPRUNG



NEWS EDITOR Anthony Holden

After a long winter, the industry is finally beginning to thaw. While many big players have gone silent in the lead-up to E3 this May, others are rushing to get their announcements out before the floodgates open. Which means lots of new games to get worked up into knots of anticipation over – or dismiss with an all-knowing ‘Pah!’ of derision.

Interestingly, there was a great deal of the latter going on at the recent Lara Croft launch event in London (see page 8), the general feeling seeming to be that Eidos and Core will have to do a whole lot more than invite the press to a posh nightclub and woo us with canapés before we’ll forgive past indiscretions. The Lara brand has been driven into the ground in the last five years, and if her latest makeover proves to be a ploy to distract us from the same tired gameplay, she can politely go to hell. (Nice canapés though.)

A recent jaunt to the frozen wastes of Quebec to see Ubi Soft’s latest line-up proved a far more interesting affair, *Splinter Cell* (page 10) providing a particularly nice surprise. *Rainbow Six: Raven Shield* too was rock solid, though cel-shaded FPS *XIII* turned out to be a lot less innovative in action than early screens suggested. But beyond any of this, it was simply encouraging to see three games, all *Unreal*-based, all looking thoroughly different – a fact that does much to dispel fears that engine licensing will lead to uniform game-spaces.

If that doesn’t fill your heart with joy, check out page 18 for something that will.

Elite Force boards Enterprise

The sequel to the hit *Star Trek* shooter swaps *Voyager* for *The Next Generation*



Looks remarkably like the original, but then *Elite Force II* still uses the *Quake III: Team Arena* engine.

AFTER THE FIRST game disproved the equation “*Star Trek* game equals pile of crap”, we’re pleased to report that *Star Trek: Elite Force II* has been announced, and is already raising smiles by transferring the action from the boring old *Voyager* to the much-loved *Enterprise*.

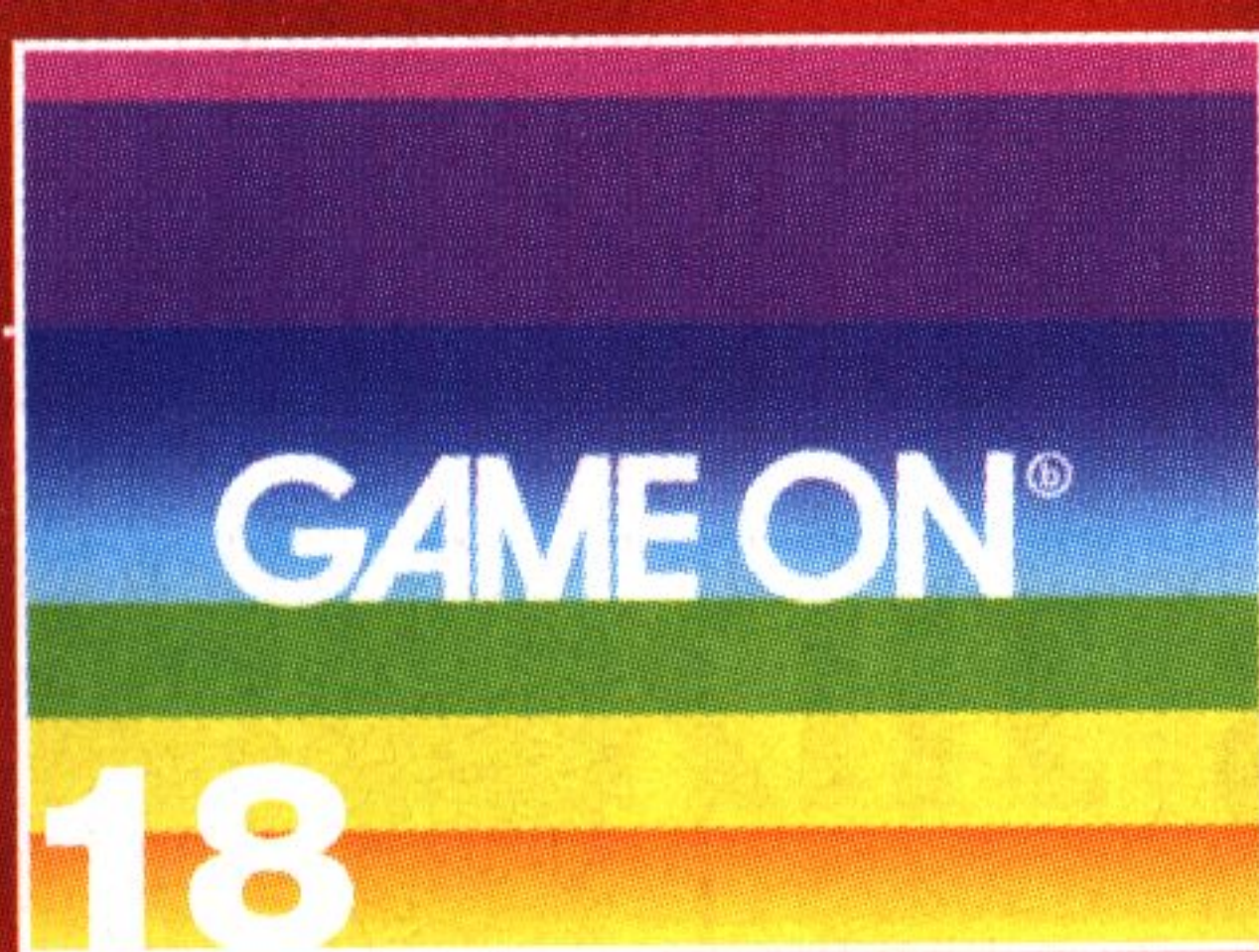
The sequel also sees Raven Software, busy working on the next *Quake* title, handing the mantle down to Ritual Entertainment. This shouldn’t make too much difference though as, like Raven, Ritual has a history of mindless but entertaining shooters – they did *S/N* for starters – so we’re not expecting a huge leap in sophistication or deep, meaningful storylines. We do hope, however, that the filler missions from the first game, in which you ploughed, *Doom*-like, through masses of dumb aliens, are replaced by more levels populated with intelligent enemies.

Ritual’s press release promises “players can expect to face off against classic *Star Trek* antagonists such as the Borg, Klingons and Romulans”. As if we hadn’t had enough Borks in the original to last us a lifetime, and a truckload of Klingons too. Still, at least we haven’t shot any Romulans for a while, and there’s talk of a new “mysterious nightmare race”. We wouldn’t mind blasting our way through a horde of Ferengi, but we think Ritual might have other plans.

All we know about the story so far is that you’ll start off on *Voyager* and pay a visit to Starfleet Academy before being assigned to the Federation’s flagship. There’s no news as yet on whether Picard, Data and co will be making a personal appearance, but Ritual says the game will be much longer than the first *Star Trek: Elite Force* and offer more weapons and environments. But then, they would say that, wouldn’t they?

Ritual Entertainment •
ETA TBA •
www.ritual.com





GAME ON
Videogames of the future



EMULATION ZONE
A forgotten gem returns to life



PCZONE CHARTS
Latest charts and release dates



HOTSHOTS
Gaze in awe at *UT 2003*

Primal screams

Game over man, game over... until *AvP2: Primal Hunt* that is

JUST WHEN THE nightmares had begun to fade, when the sight of bulging chests no longer made us reel back in panic, when we could once again walk down dimly lit corridors without instinctively checking for acid burns, they go and do this to us... *Aliens Versus Predator 2: Primal Hunt*. It is of course the first add-on pack for *AvP2*, the scariest game of 2001, and a very generous package it's looking too.

Though not actually developed by Monolith, the add-on has been left in the experienced hands of Third Law Interactive (*Kiss: Psycho Circus*), and once again takes us back to that terrible, awful place known as Planet LV1201.

This time around the story centres on an ancient artefact thought to have the power to control Aliens, and once again gives us the choice of three playable races in a total of nine new single-player levels. Playing as the Predator, you start the game 500 years back in time, when you happen to stumble across the mythical artefact on a routine Alien hunt. Unfortunately you become trapped in a stasis field the same day and only

wake up 500 years later, when Dunya, a female mercenary searching for the artefact, accidentally wakes you up. Also wandering around looking for the device is a lone Predalien, a horrific Alien-Predator hybrid who wants to see the gadget destroyed. Meanwhile Aliens of all life-stages are running around eating humans, Arnie is nowhere to be seen, and all hell generally breaks loose.

In typical *AvP* style, the missions are split into three for each of the three races, but with the Predalien replacing the standard Alien. New weapons include deployable sentry guns and dual pistols for Dunya, a self-destruct function and energy flechette for the Predator, and presumably a whole array of attack variations for our friend the Predalien. Four new multi-player maps will be included in *Primal Hunt*, along with a couple of new creatures indigenous to the planet. And apparently, by the end of the three campaigns, we'll know all the answers to questions left hanging at the end of the original game. Sold.

Third Law Interactive • ETA July • AvP2.sierra.com



Brothers in arms

More intense than the Normandy landing? It must be *MOH: Team Assault*

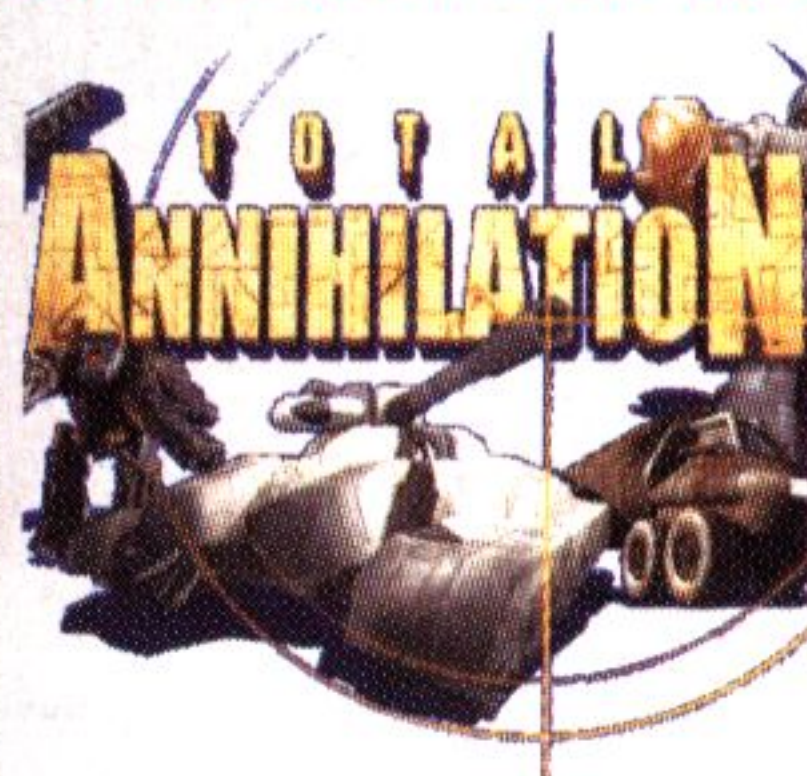
WHILE WE'RE IN an expansion pack mood, it would be remiss of us not to remind you that there's a *Medal Of Honor* add-on on its way, *MOH: Team Assault*. As the title suggests, the expansion puts much more emphasis on team dynamics, with massively enhanced friendly AI and proper, fleshed-out personalities for each of your squad-mates. In short, you'll have to work together to stay alive like never before.

Once again, you'll play as brave lieutenant Mike Powell, in nine new levels split between three missions: the Battle Of The Bulge, the Soviet invasion of Berlin, and Operation Market Garden. All the single-player levels will be available as multiplayer maps, along with a few other scenario-based multiplayer maps. New items such as smoke grenades (offering cover from snipers), and an array of new weapons including a full Soviet arsenal will also be included.



SHORTS

A KOREA IN THE TA



Word has slipped out that Korean publisher/developer Phantagram (*Kingdom Under Fire*) is working on a sequel to Cavedog's 1997 real-time strategy classic, *Total Annihilation*. That's right, RTS fans: *Total Annihilation 2*! Quite how the licence ended up in such unlikely hands is a mystery, but we're hopeful that any developer from a nation that airs RTS matches on prime-time TV will treat the project with the respect it deserves. No other details are available at this stage, but no doubt all will be revealed at E3.

TRIBES OF ONE



Sierra has confirmed the existence and details of a new standalone, single-player *Tribes* game, to be bundled with a fully patched version of *Tribes 2* and packaged as *Tribes: Fast Attack*. The solo campaign is being developed by Inevitable Entertainment, and features nine new levels and a completely new graphics engine. The package also features two fan-created mods, new multiplayer maps and tutorials. In the United States the game will be sold at full price, but with a half-price rebate to existing *Tribes 2* owners. Hopefully the same courtesy will be extended to us.

THQ MARVELS



Superhero fans must be busting out of their spandex at the moment, given the rate at which new superhero-based games are being announced. The latest batch comes from publishing giant THQ, which has partnered with Marvel to produce a whole slew of comic-related titles between now and 2007. The deal gives THQ exclusive access to franchises such as Captain America, The Punisher and Nick Fury, and the first game is set to appear in 2004.

If pain persists

Sometimes, they do make 'em like they used to: *Painkiller*



The id influence is all too clear.



There's no shortage of polys, but little evidence of novelty.

THERE WAS A day not so long ago, before the term 'first-person shooter' became universal, when any game with a 3D environment and a firearm wobbling at the bottom of the screen was referred to somewhat sneeringly as a *Doom*-clone. Thankfully, the genre has since developed enough to make the term seem faintly ridiculous; and yet, every now and then a game comes along that gives new life to this quaint turn of phrase.

Painkiller is a pure action 3D shooter. It's all about gibbing demons, fragging zombies

and capping vampires. The guns are big and plentiful, the plot silly and largely incidental. Yea, this is one game that is not ashamed to be a *Doom*-clone.

Extremely alert Bulletin readers may recall that this game was formerly in development at Polish studio Lemon Interactive (*Starmageddon*). However, several key members of the *Painkiller* team left Lemon recently to set up their own outfit, People Can Fly, and they took *Painkiller* with them.

Having worked on games such as *Odium* and *Katharsis*, People Can Fly is no rookie operation, and early glimpses of *Painkiller* are

rather promising. One of the more interesting features is a soul collection system whereby a new special power is gained for every 100 evil minions put to death. The nature of the powers is yet to be revealed, but the eventual aim is to morph into the form of the Demon Lord Samael, with whom the hero of the game has forged some sort of ungodly pact.

Good to know the gameplay isn't entirely derivative then; let's just hope it's more *Doom III* than *Doom I*.

People Can Fly • ETA late 2002 •
www.peoplecanfly.com

X Factor

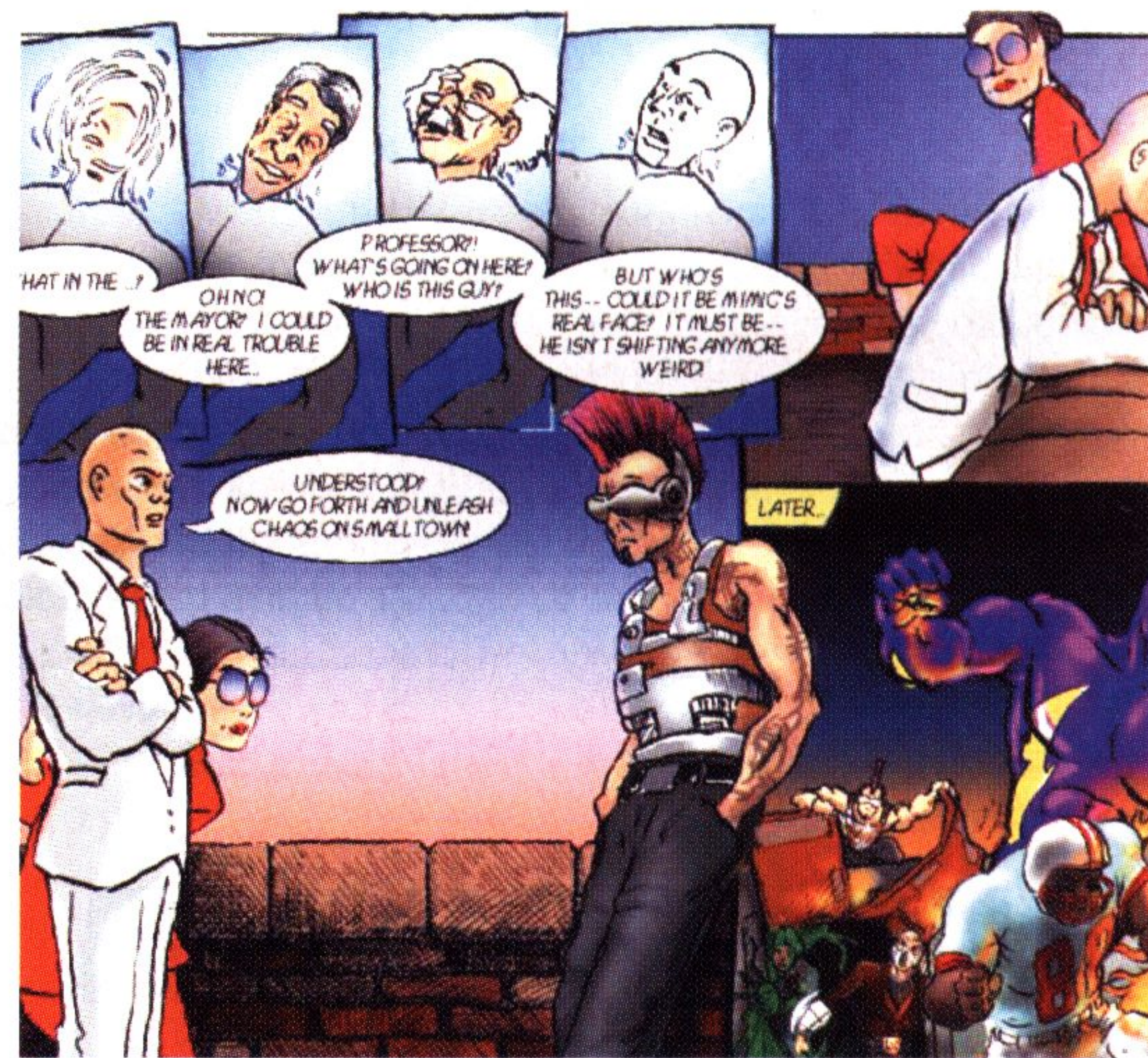
Holy jumping bandwagons!
It's *Hero X*

HOT ON THE heels of Irrational Games' *Freedom Force* (reviewed last issue), Amazing Games has announced its own superhero game, *Hero X*. Also hoping to draw on the humorous value of campy old-skool superheroes, *Hero X* bears some chilling aesthetic and thematic parallels with *Freedom Force*, though as an action/adventure rather than an RPG, we're hoping any similarities remain purely superficial.

Set in Smalltown, USA, the game puts you as a novice superhero on your first assignment, sent to clean up a particularly nasty spate of evil-doing in a town that's never had its own superhero before. Obviously it's all about gaining and employing your array of superpowers, which will grow to an arsenal of more than 50 throughout the game. As you'd expect, all the classic powers such as X-ray vision, invisibility and the ability to leap over tall buildings in a single bound will be up for grabs.

While gameplay seems to be fairly straightforward mission-based action/adventure stuff, there are a few unexpected variations such as random enemy encounters and an element of strategic planning. Wait a goddam minute... RPG elements, strategic planning – it's starting to sound more familiar by the sentence. *Freedom Force*-lite? Find out the truth in our next exciting episode.

Amazing Games • ETA summer •
www.us.infogames.com

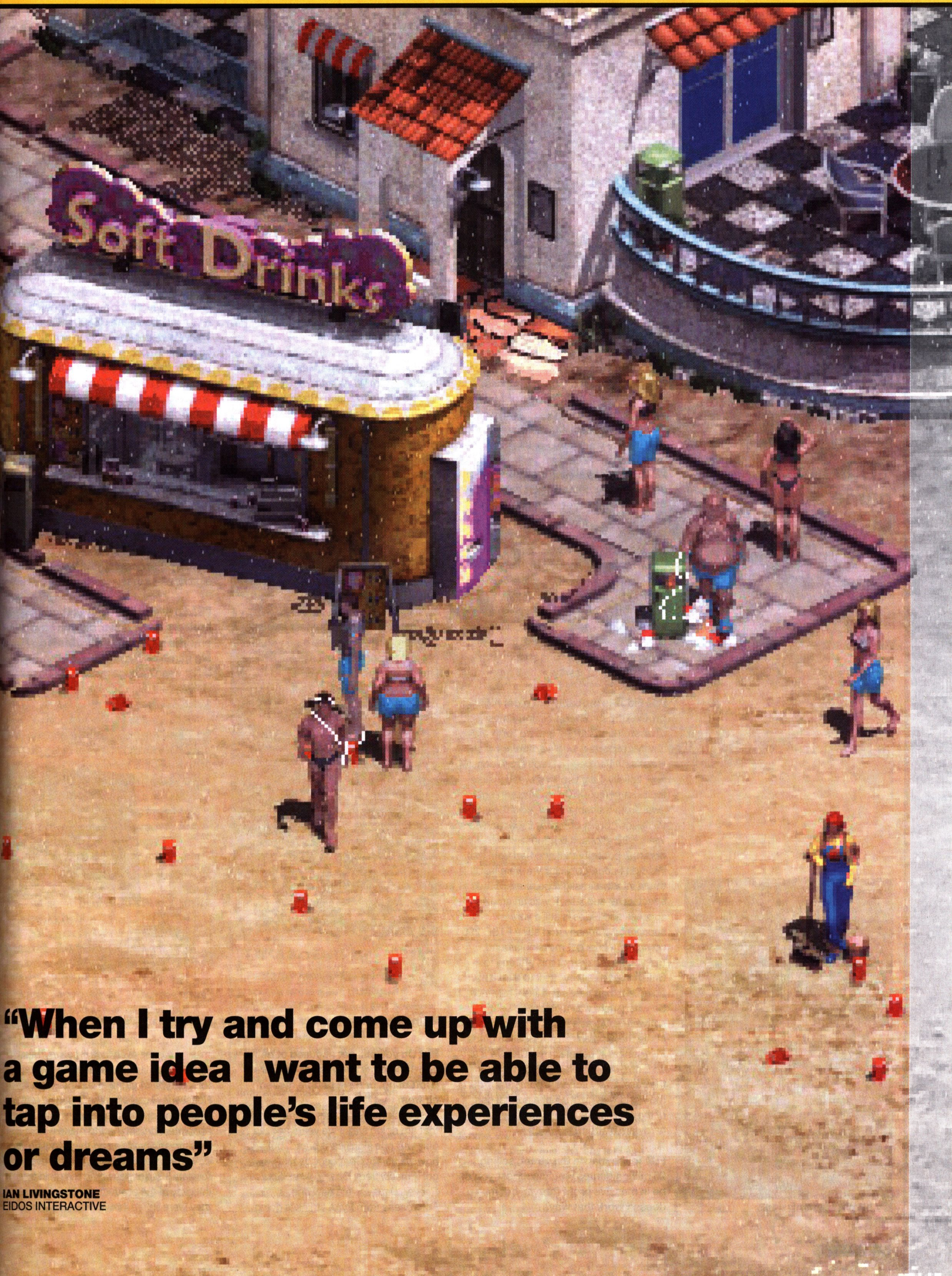


Will the ironic humour succeed this time?



It may look like *The Sims*, but don't worry, it's more violent.

"It's all about gaining and employing your array of superpowers"



“When I try and come up with a game idea I want to be able to tap into people’s life experiences or dreams”

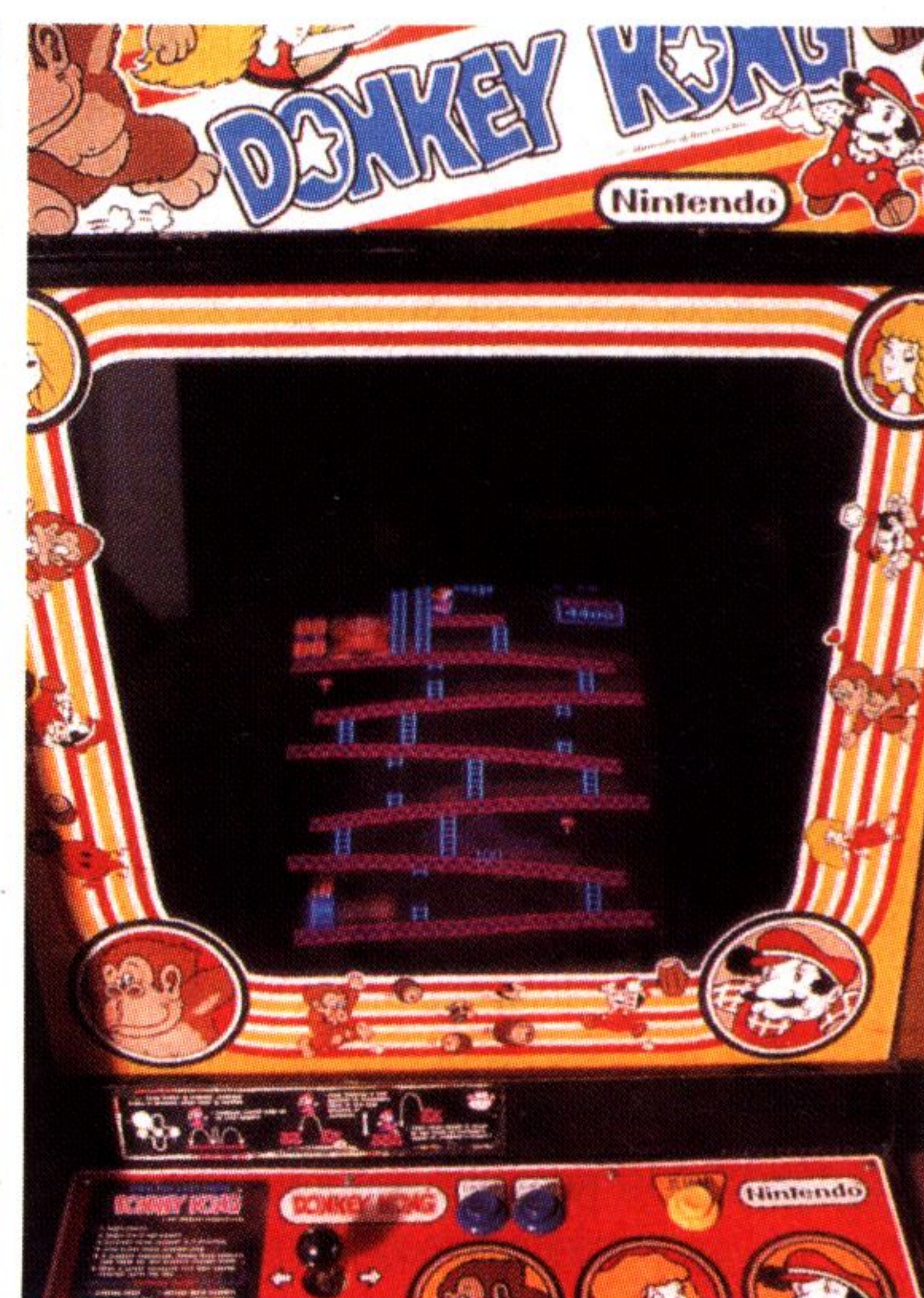
IAN LIVINGSTONE
EIDOS INTERACTIVE

Joystick generations

Videogaming basks in the cultural spotlight as Game On comes to the Barbican



Some of the more bizarre offerings are in the Japanese games section.



Mario makes his debut.

FORTY YEARS OF videogames. Forty glorious years since scientists first decided it would be better to interact with a blurry cathode blip on a monochrome screen than conduct the serious research the machines were intended for. What better cause for celebration could there possibly be?

Starting on May 16 and running for four months, London's Barbican gallery is shortly to play host to Game On, the biggest independent show devoted to videogame culture and history ever attempted. And it is above all a celebration of videogames, not a wanker's guide to the place of games in the visual arts or a self-indulgent attempt to legitimise gaming to the masses – simply a comprehensive and global look at the 40-year history of games and how they've shaped our lives... and a few directions they might take in the future.

To get some impression of the scope of the show, it took guest curator Lucien King (a top chap with wide experience in the games industry) four years to put it all together. The show covers 15,000 square metres across two floors of the Barbican, and houses around 130 playable games machines. Many of the older machines are among the only working examples of their kind.

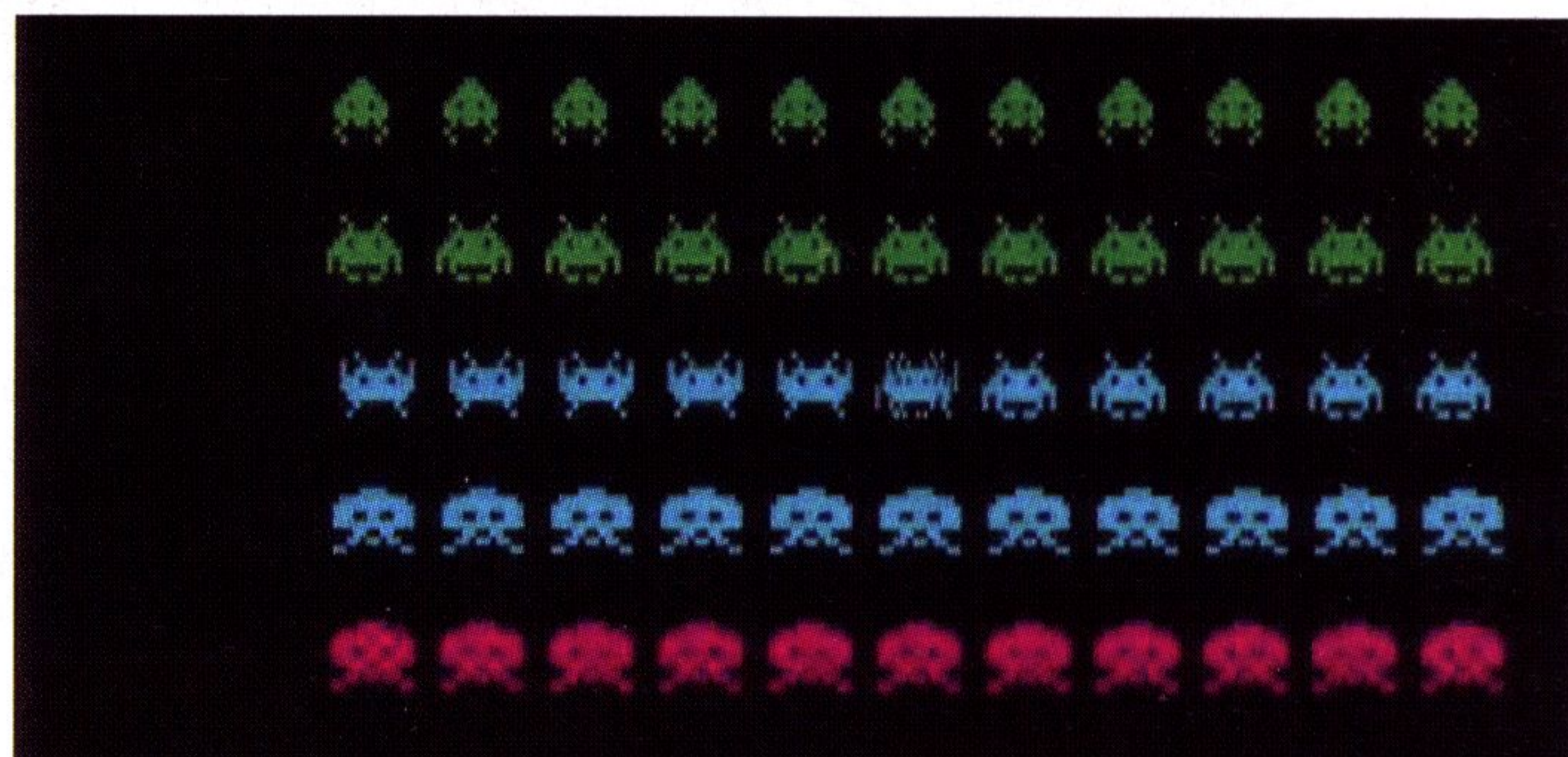
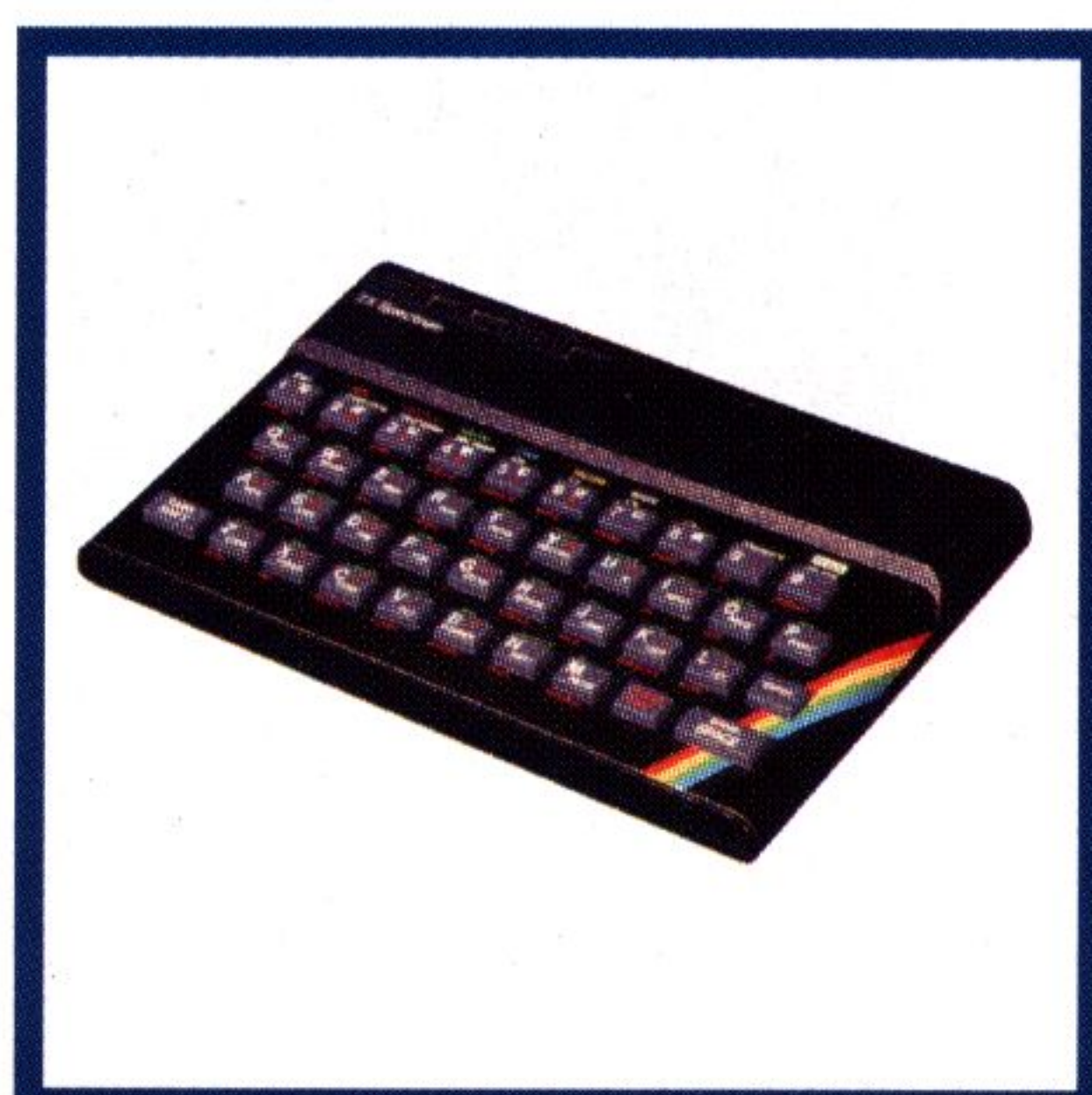
It's a hugely ambitious achievement, not to mention an important opportunity for games, so long seen as an immature medium, to shine in a wider cultural context. Only the American Museum of the Moving Image in New York, and a few smaller touring exhibitions such as Videotopia and Bit Generations, have ever

attempted anything like Game On, and never in such comprehensive fashion.

Broken down into 16 themed sections, the exhibition starts where it all began: the PDP-1. This is the machine that spawned *Space War* in 1962, as well as even earlier experiments such as *Tennis For Two* in 1958. The ancient tape and punch card beast is the only non-playable machine in the exhibition (there's only ten of them left), but an emulated version of *Space War* will be on hand for those looking for the ultimate retro experience.

Having tired of *Space War* (estimated time: 30 seconds), the next section of the show is devoted to early arcade games, and takes in everything from the first ever coin-ops, *Computer Space* (1971) and *Pong* (1972), through classics such as *Space Invaders*,

Parappa the Rapper features in a special section devoted to the role of sound in games.





Contemporary titles on show include **GTA3** and **UT 2003**.



Pac-Man, Asteroids and Donkey Kong. All on freeplay of course, which means **PC ZONE** will still be in this room fighting over high scores until security intervenes.

Of the remaining sections of the show, only a few share this chronological disposition, the rest breaking down into themes. The Games Families section examines genre and types of gameplay; the Character Design section looks at Mario, Sonic and Lara. Other sections are devoted to online gaming, the making of games, Japanese and US games culture, contemporary arcades and current generation platforms.

One of the key things expressed in the exhibition is that videogames represent a new tradition, one that can't be understood solely in the context of the visual arts or cinema or any other tradition. Games are to be played not displayed, and that's just how Game On is presenting them – not merely as some new form of art waiting to be accepted by the establishment. As Lucien puts it: "This whole question – are videogames art? The answer is, they are art, they are science, they are technology, they are entertainment. People don't like that, they want a simple answer – but it's not as simple as that. It's barking up the wrong tree."

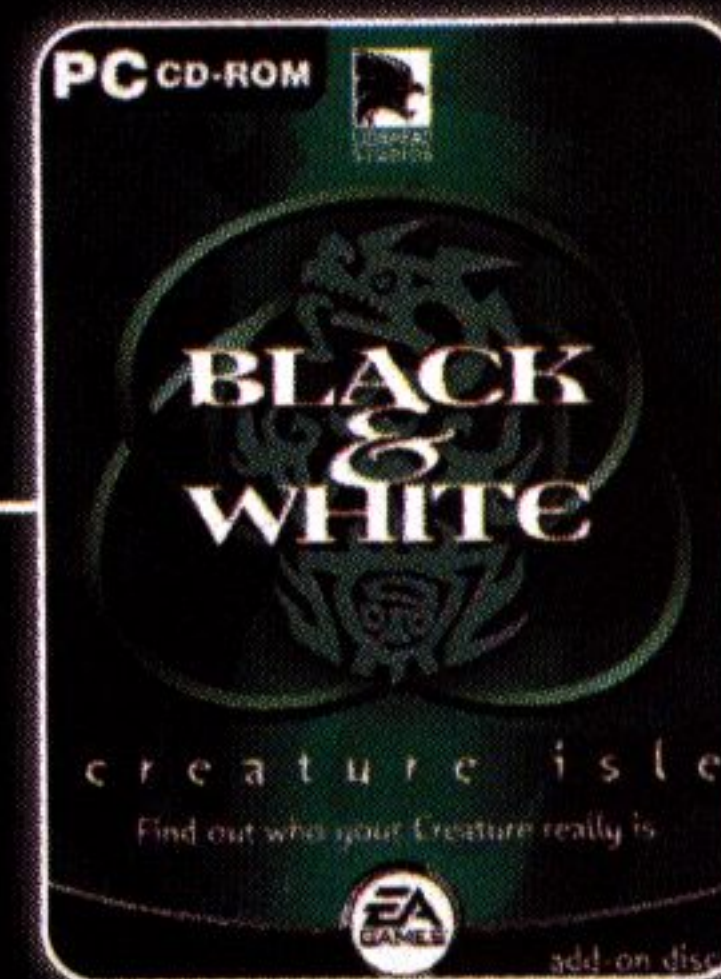
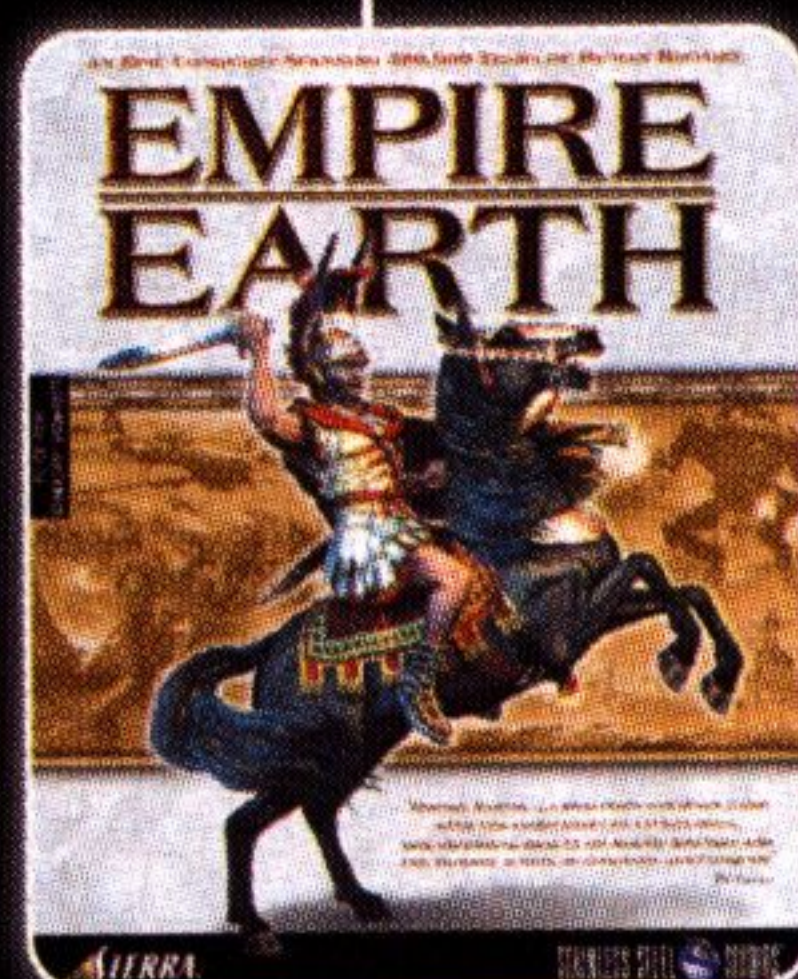
Following its four-month stay at the Barbican, Game On will spend a similar amount of time at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, before moving on to Paris, Helsinki, the US and Tokyo. Don't miss out.

Tickets: £11 adult, £5 kids •
www.gameonweb.co.uk



GAIN THE UPPER HAND

Now you can raise the standard of your strategy gameplay beyond expectations with Microsoft® SideWinder® Strategic Commander. Choose or create gaming profiles that replace complex keyboard commands with simple button clicks. Featuring innovative map movement controls that let you twist, spin and scroll around your gaming world quickly and intuitively. Gain the competitive edge as you train, deploy and command your forces faster and more efficiently in top strategy games including *Empire Earth*, *Black & White: Creature Isle* and the epic adventure, *Dungeon Siege*.



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www.sidewindergaming.co.uk

Microsoft

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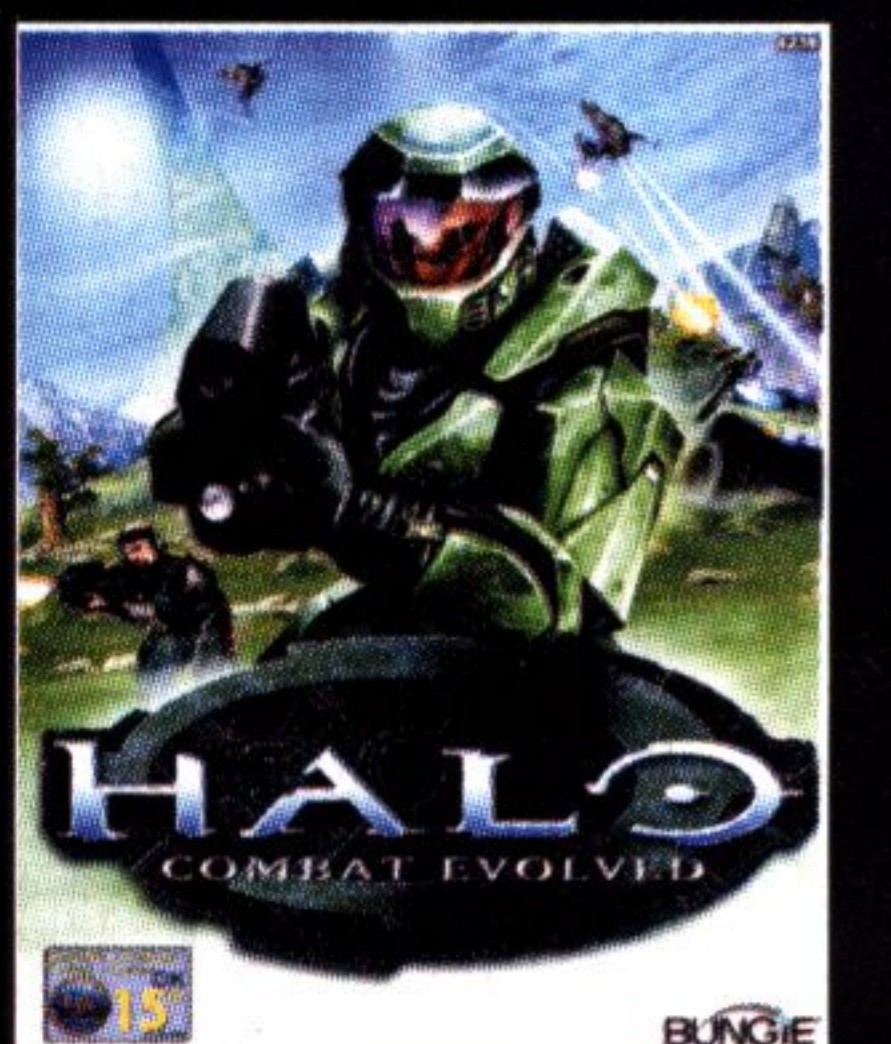
HUMANITY'S LAST HOPE IS YOU.



No pressure, but the mother of all combat games has arrived. Halo takes you to an alien ring world where you must destroy mankind's sworn enemy: The Covenant. Vanquish the alien hordes with a vast arsenal of weapons and vehicles, whilst laughing in the face of the Geneva Convention. Any wonder Edge magazine gave it 10/10. Just prepare your armoured underwear.

www.xbox.com/uk/halo

PLAY MORE. PLAY HALO.™



EMULATION ZONE

Stuart Campbell reports from a world where no platform is out of reach



The Big Cheese, an officially sanctioned emulator release.



Another top-notch new MPU3/4 title, Boulder Dash.

“Not only has Empire allowed its older machines to be emulated, it's even gone so far as to assist in the process”

FRUITS OF PROGRESS

IT ISN'T OFTEN Emulation Zone gets to report some good news about the attitude of software companies towards emulation, but today is such a day. The MPU3/4 fruit machine emulator has come a long way since we first reported on it last year (issue 107), with all sorts of technical and graphical enhancements, but perhaps the single most encouraging development comes in the form of fruit machine maker Empire's decision to explicitly permit the emulation of all their machines beyond a certain age. Indeed, not only has the company chosen to allow its older machines to be emulated, it's even gone so far as to assist in the

process by supplying correct reel graphics and flyer images to MPU3/4 developers so they can build the most accurate recreation of Empire's machines possible. It's a major breakthrough for emulation, and one that could have major ramifications across the board. In fact, Emulation Zone plans to buy a hat immediately, in order to tip it in Empire's direction for taking such a sensible, practical attitude.

What's more, the author of MPU3/4 has just released a version of his emu that finally opens up the development tools to all, rather than just a select few coders. The combined result of this and

Empire's pronouncement has been an explosion in high-quality releases for the emu, covering all bases of fruit-machine gaming from £250 club machines to the one-button granny games found in bingo parlours. And with summer fair season on the way, keen PC ZONE viewers will soon be able to go to town on the vintage fruities that tend to inhabit Britain's travelling fairgrounds and make loads of money to spend on candyfloss and slightly undercooked chips. How much better can life get for emulation fans?

In other news, the world's first PlayStation 2 emulator, PCSX2, has been born. However, before you get all excited and start trying to download

GTAVI ROMs, the emu doesn't actually run any PlayStation 2 games yet. At this stage the best it can manage is some homegrown tech demos and a feeble version of *Pong*, but with the code now unleashed in the rampant emu coding community it's only a matter of time before *Pro Evolution Soccer* is within our grasp. Let's just hope that Sony takes as liberal a view with this emu as Empire has with its fruities.

LINKS

maroneyswebhovel.emuunlim.com – MPU3/4 emulator and game files
www.empiregames.co.uk – Empire homepage, for legal ROM downloads
www.pcsx2.ngemu.com – PCSX2 homepage

EMULATION OF THE MONTH

▲ SUPER MARIO RPG (NINTENDO/SQUARE, SNES)

One of the most powerful arguments for emulation is that if we all stuck to the letter of the law, we'd simply never get to play fantastic games like this. Nintendo never released the SNES's last-ever *Mario* game in Europe, which meant that only people prepared to invalidate their warranty by chipping their console and paying through the nose for a rare import copy were ever able to experience one of the 16-bit era's greatest games.

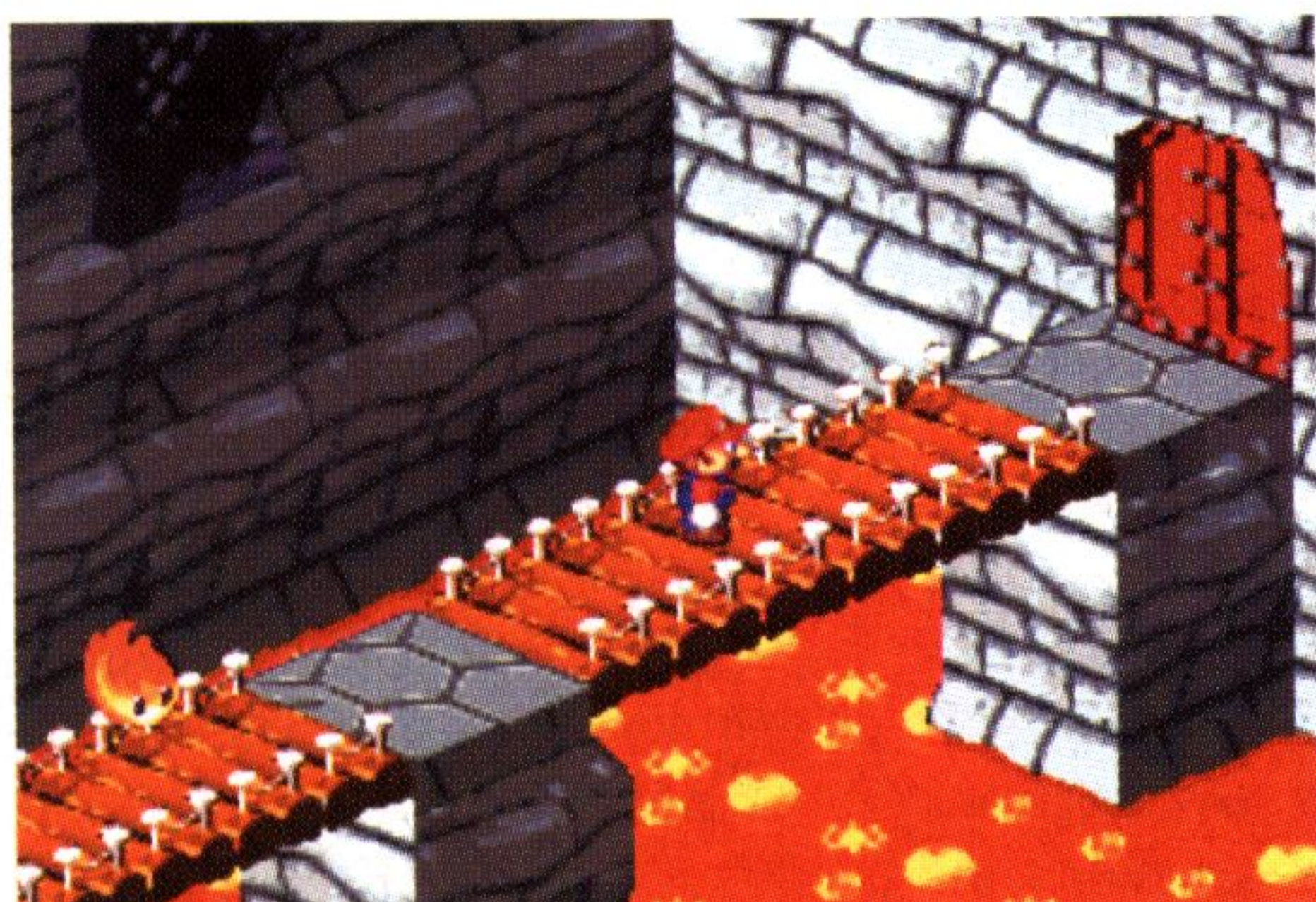
Made by *Final Fantasy* creator Square, 1996's *Super Mario RPG* is, while structurally similar, a far superior game to any of the *FF* titles. [*cough* – Ed] One of the reasons for this is that *SMRPG*

doesn't use the 'random encounter' approach to battles – enemies can generally be avoided if you don't want to fight, leaving you to get on with exploring the game's charming and funny plot. It's an inventive and supremely entertaining story, which at one point even sees Mario and arch-enemy Bowser teaming up and fighting side by side. Suffice to say that *SMRPG* is one of a microscopically tiny handful of games that has ever squeezed both an out-loud laugh and a lump in the throat from Emulation Zone's cold, cold heart, and if that isn't a recommendation we don't know what is.

The game plays very nicely on both of the leading SNES emulators, SNES9X and ZSNES, although we recommend the slightly more elegant implementation of ZSNES. All that remains is for you to turn to the dark side and find yourself a copy of the game ROM, no doubt destroying Nintendo's entire corporate structure in the process. You evil fiend.

LINKS

www.zsnes.com – ZSNES homepage
www.snes9x.com – SNES9X homepage



Better than *Final Fantasy*?



There's always time to smell the flowers.



Mario and Bowser – together at last.

SHORTS

PARADISE PAUSED



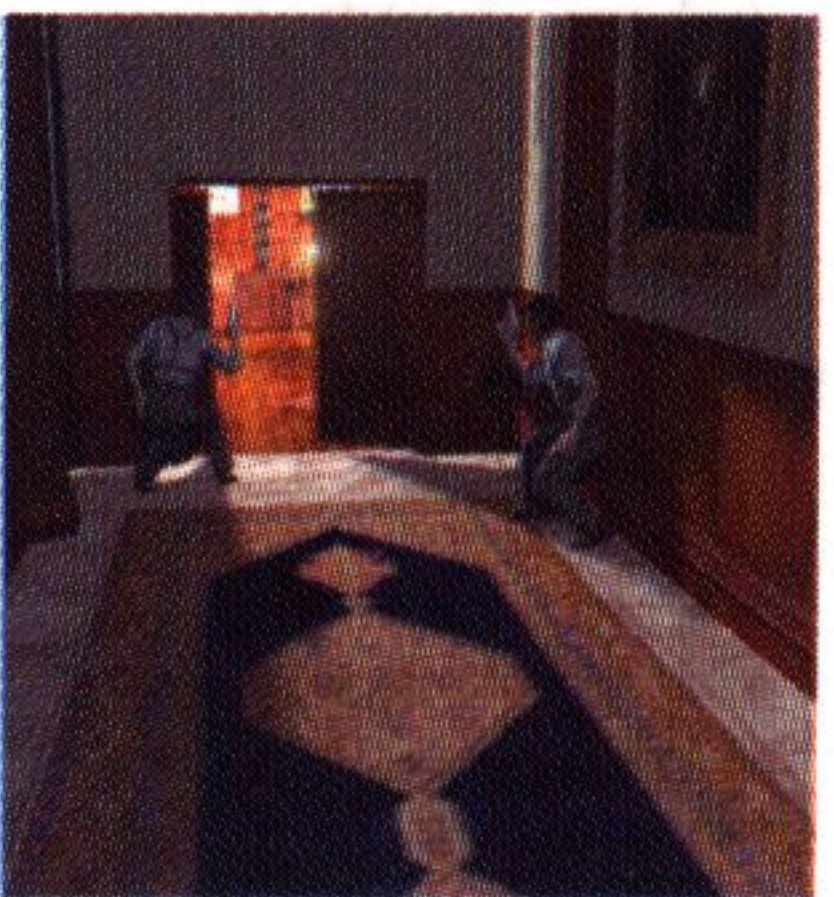
Outcast: The Lost Paradise, the sprawling action adventure sequel in the works at Belgian developer Appeal, has been put on hold. The developers have taken up an offer to make some sort of licence-based console game for Infogrames, but they assure us that work on *Outcast 2* will resume in a year or so. They also assure us that having the extra time to hone internal development tools will result in a far better game. The crafty spin-doctoring devils.

TAKE IT ON THE QIN



Object Software is the leading light in Chinese PC game development. Which admittedly isn't a great claim to fame, but they did make the enjoyable RTS *Three Kingdoms: Fate Of The Dragon*, as well as its follow-up *Dragon Throne*. They have now announced a new game, *Prince Of Qin*, described as an action-RPG, which in this case seems to be a euphemism for 'Diablo-clone'. Again set in ancient China, the game will offer strategic team-based fighting based on Chinese elemental principles, as well as online action for up to 500 players on one server.

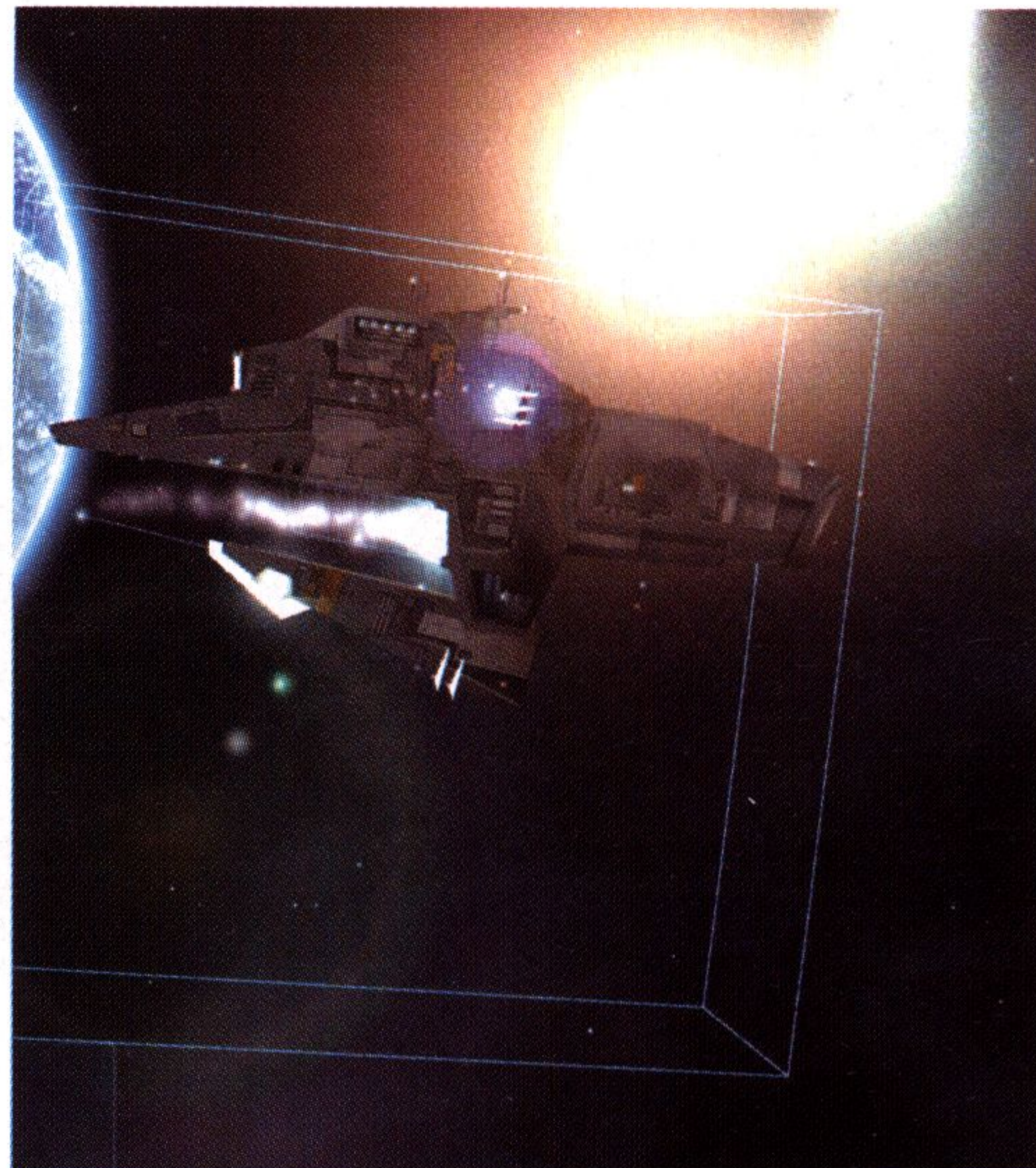
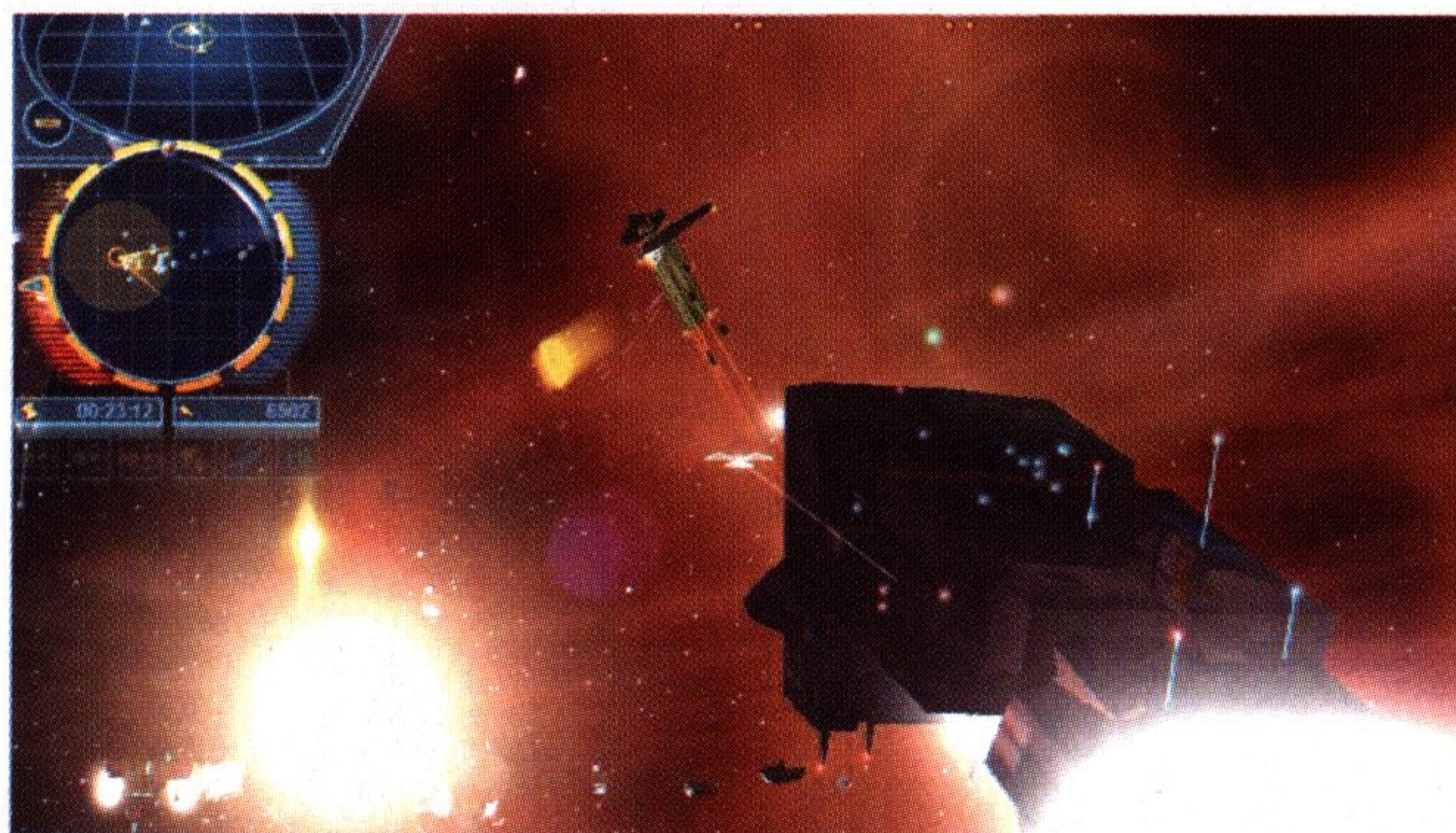
GREEN LIVING



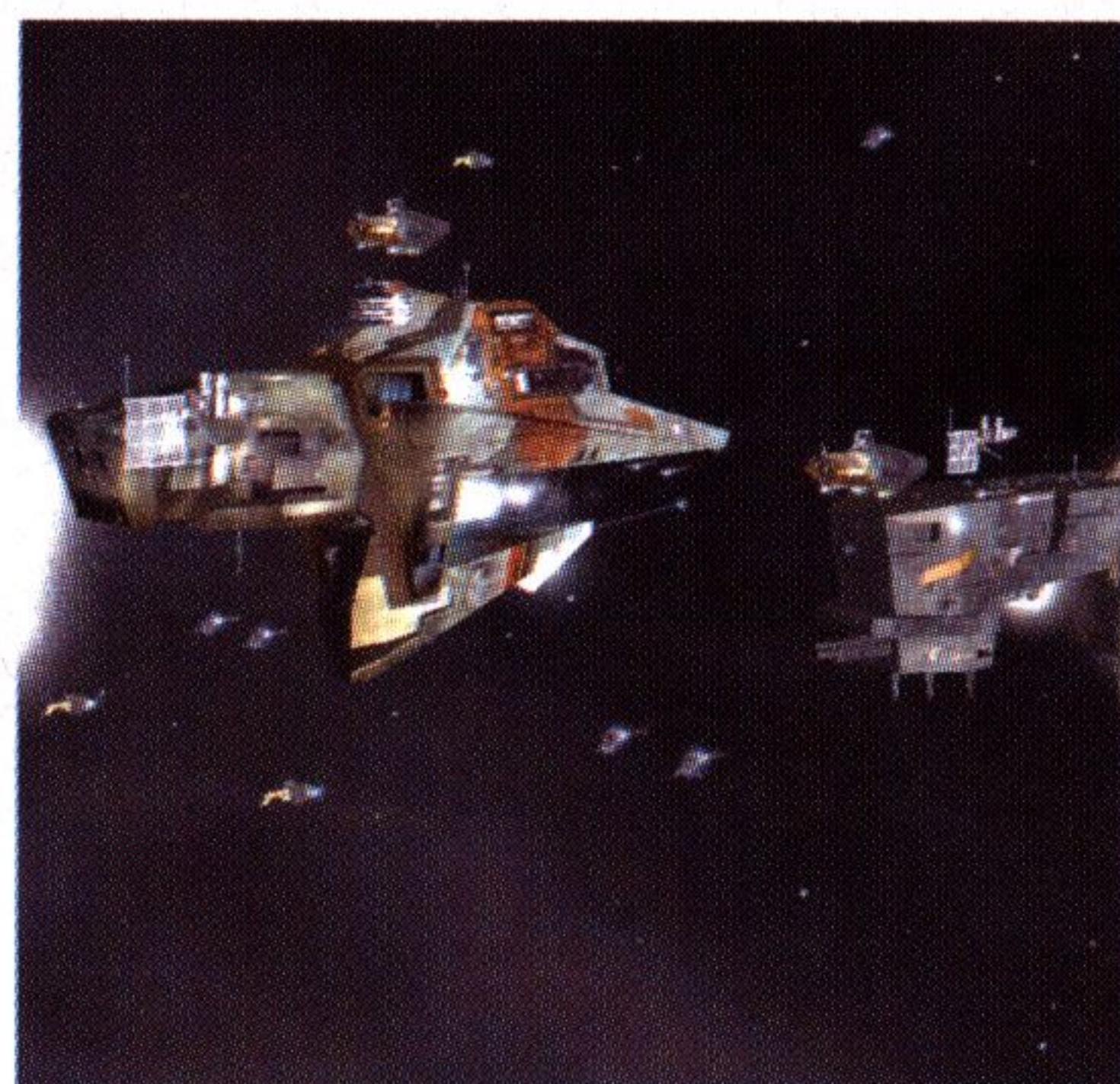
Everyone loves a good conspiracy, especially if you're the one in charge of it, and this is the case in Flying Lab Software's forthcoming tactical strategy game *Delta Green*. Based on the pen-and-paper RPG of the same name, *Delta Green* puts you in the role of leader of a covert group in a struggle against fearsome Lovecraftian creatures. It's being built on the new LithTech Jupiter system, and offers a mixture of strategic planning (recruitment, research, etc) and tactical action, in which you guide squads of soldiers through a variety of horrific scenarios.

Star blazers

Mindscape reaches for the stars with *Starmageddon*



Possibly the most orange game ever...



It's a rousing space saga in the 'search for a new home' tradition.



LAST TIME WE looked at this fantastic-looking space RTS, it was wandering lost in the ether, bereft of a local publisher, but we're happy to say it's recently been picked up by Mindscape, who clearly know a pretty game when they see one. *Starmageddon* is the in-house debut for Polish developer/publisher Lemon Interactive, and is now slated for release sometime this autumn.

As we revealed in issue 109, *Starmageddon* has more than a passing graphical resemblance to *Homeworld*, yet should hopefully take the strategy side of things to a whole new level. Simon Orams, games product manager at Mindscape, seems confident enough: "*Starmageddon* is a truly spectacular title that will redefine the RTS genre. The game takes the best and proven elements of the genre

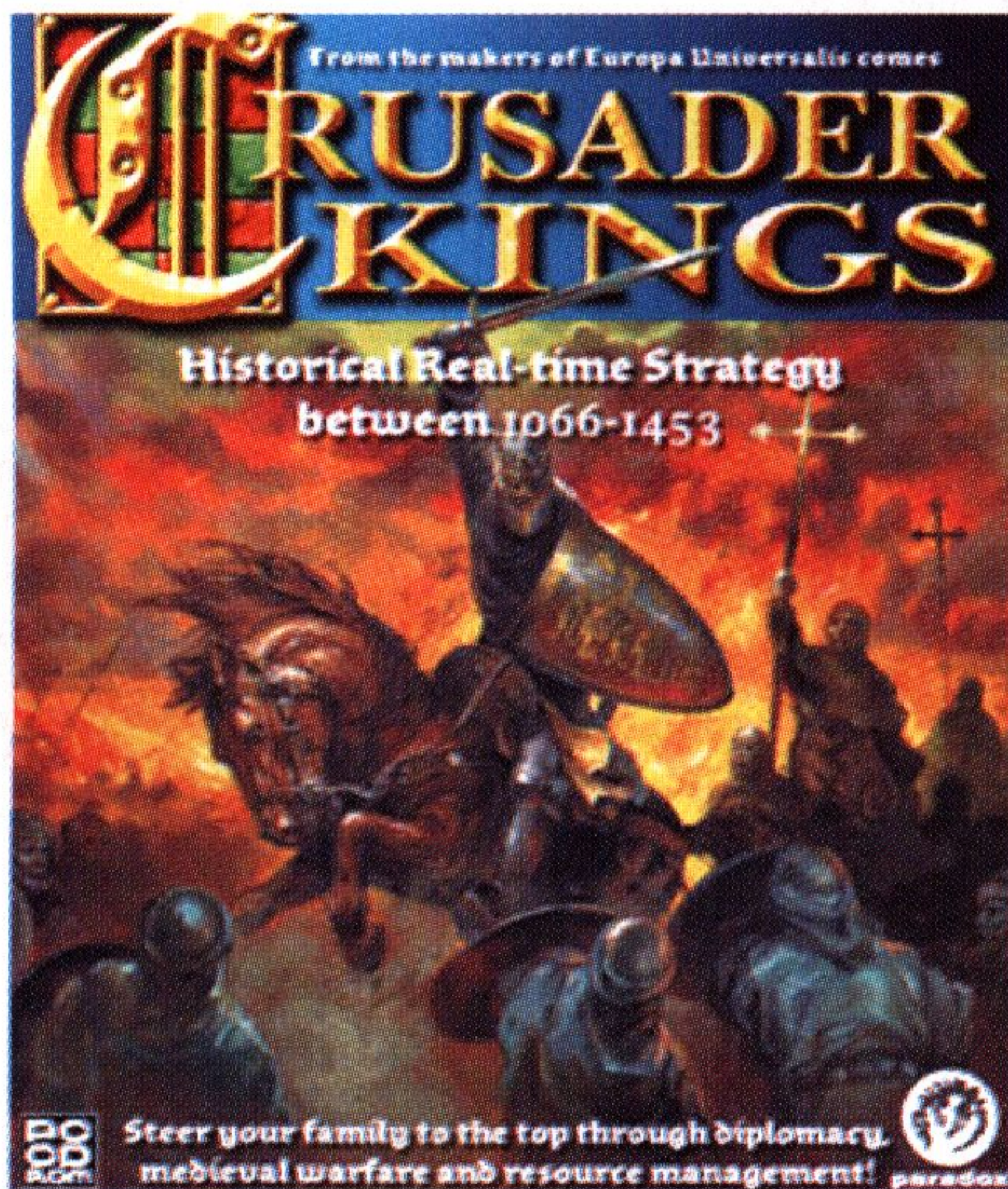
and combines them with some sparkling innovations, making it a universally playable game."

The latter part of that statement is no doubt referring to the fact that, unlike *Homeworld*, *Starmageddon* is being designed with accessibility in mind. With its easy-to-use intuitive single-screen interface, hopes are high that even non-RTS fans will be drawn into its glimmering 3D universe. Expect a more in-depth preview in the near future, but in the meantime feast your miserable earth-bound eyes on the glory of the heavens.

Lemon Interactive • ETA Autumn •
www.lemon-interactive.com

Paragons of virtue

The *Europa Universalis* engine gets religion, in *Crusader Kings*



No pics yet, just a box-shot... figure that out.

STILL FLUSHED WITH the relative success of *Europa Universalis*, Paradox Entertainment is poised to continue its historical renaissance by using the *EU* engine in new strategy game *Crusader Kings*. Focusing on the feudal kingdoms of medieval Europe, Persia and North Africa between 1066AD and 1453AD, *CK* is, according to its creators: "more about prestige and wealth than traditional empire building."

Good old-fashioned Christian honour and piety will be among the primary goals of this strategy game, meaning traditional RTS requisites such as border expansion and bashing ill-nourished soldiers over the head with a mace will take a firm backseat. Much of the gameplay will also concentrate on your ability to

politically brown-nose your way into the affections of local lords and bishops as well as the Pope himself.

To cement the game's Catholic vibe, players will only be allowed to control Christian monarchies, principalities and empires. Merchant states like Venice, Genoa and the Hanseatic League as well as the slightly more aggressive Mongol hordes will be present but only as non-playable nations.

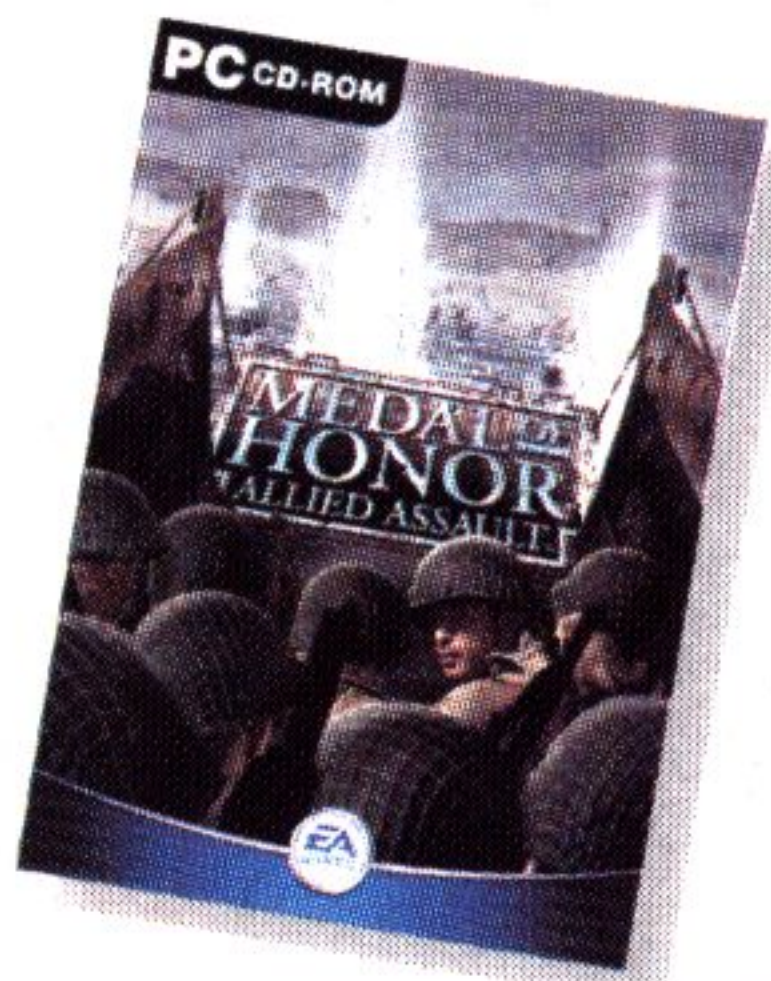
Interestingly, players will also be able to port save games from *CK* over to *Europa Universalis 2*. All in all it looks like hardcore historian-gamers could be in for a busy autumn.

Paradox Entertainment • ETA Autumn •
www.paradoxplaza.com

amazon.co.uk

Competition

Win one of thirty copies of Medal of Honor



We've got copies of the world's finest first-person shooter coming out of our ears and we're looking for suitable homes. Interested? Read on...

We'd been waiting for years for something to knock *Half-Life* off its perch as king of the first-person shooter, and, after a brief flirtation with *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* we went the whole hog and proposed to *Medal Of Honor*. Why? Because if we're going to spend the rest of our lives with one game then it's got to be the best and *Medal Of Honor* delivers a massively atmospheric and cinematic take on World War II, with a game that fully deserves to sit at the very top of our shooters A-List.

If you haven't bought the game by now, chances are you're a tightwad with no intention of shelling out until the game hits budget. Shame on you. However, there is another way, thanks to those thoroughly nice chaps at Amazon.co.uk. The UK's leading online retailer has teamed up with PC ZONE to offer you a stab at winning one of 20 rationed copies of *Medal Of Honor*.

And, if you're not fortunate enough to win a copy for free, we seriously suggest

you put your hand in your pocket for once, get yourself onto Amazon.co.uk and order it online at a price that's £5 cheaper than the recommended retail price.

While you're on there you can cure yourself of your miserly affliction by browsing through the hundreds of other PC titles available, which Amazon.co.uk will dispatch to you faster and more accurately than a sniper's bullet. Well almost. What's more, for the month of May only there's a big selection of PC titles available at just £19.99. What are you waiting for?

For your chance to win, simply come up with an amusing caption for the screenshot below, featuring a trio of Nazis playing cards. "Schnapp!" and "Polka face" have already been used in PC ZONE and any duplicate entries will be disqualified. The 30 best entries will win a copy of the game and, if anyone betters our efforts (which is unlikely, let's face it), we'll stick a bonus prize in from the PC ZONE cupboards.

Just think of a genius caption for the pic below and send it on a postcard, along with with all the information requested, to the address below.

■ Please include your name, address, daytime phone number and email address (and age if under 18).

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SHORTS

CRACKING THE FPS

Shoot to Kill

Codemasters has caused a minor outbreak of controversy with the announcement of a new FPS entitled *Shoot To Kill: Colombian Crackdown*. But while you might think that statements that accompanied the release, such as: "We intend to totally reinvent the clichéd first-person shooter" might be the cause of the outrage, it was actually more to do with the fact that American readers found the title a bit too close to *Shoot To Kill: Columbine Crackdown*. Which is unfortunate. The game actually puts you in the role of a DEA agent, out to settle the score with Bad Men and Evil Drugs.

FALLOUT SELLS OUT?

Fallout

Details have leaked from Interplay of a new entry in Black Isle's hugely respected *Fallout* series, with the odd title *Fallout Fantasy*. According to our information, the new game is not being developed by Black Isle, but rather Digital Mayhem, an Interplay studio best known for internal console conversions. And sure enough, the new *Fallout* game is whispered to be a console-only, dumbed-down action-RPG. Apparently this is not the long-rumoured *Fallout 3* then, but whether that game is in separate development for PC remains unclear. As always, we're on the case.

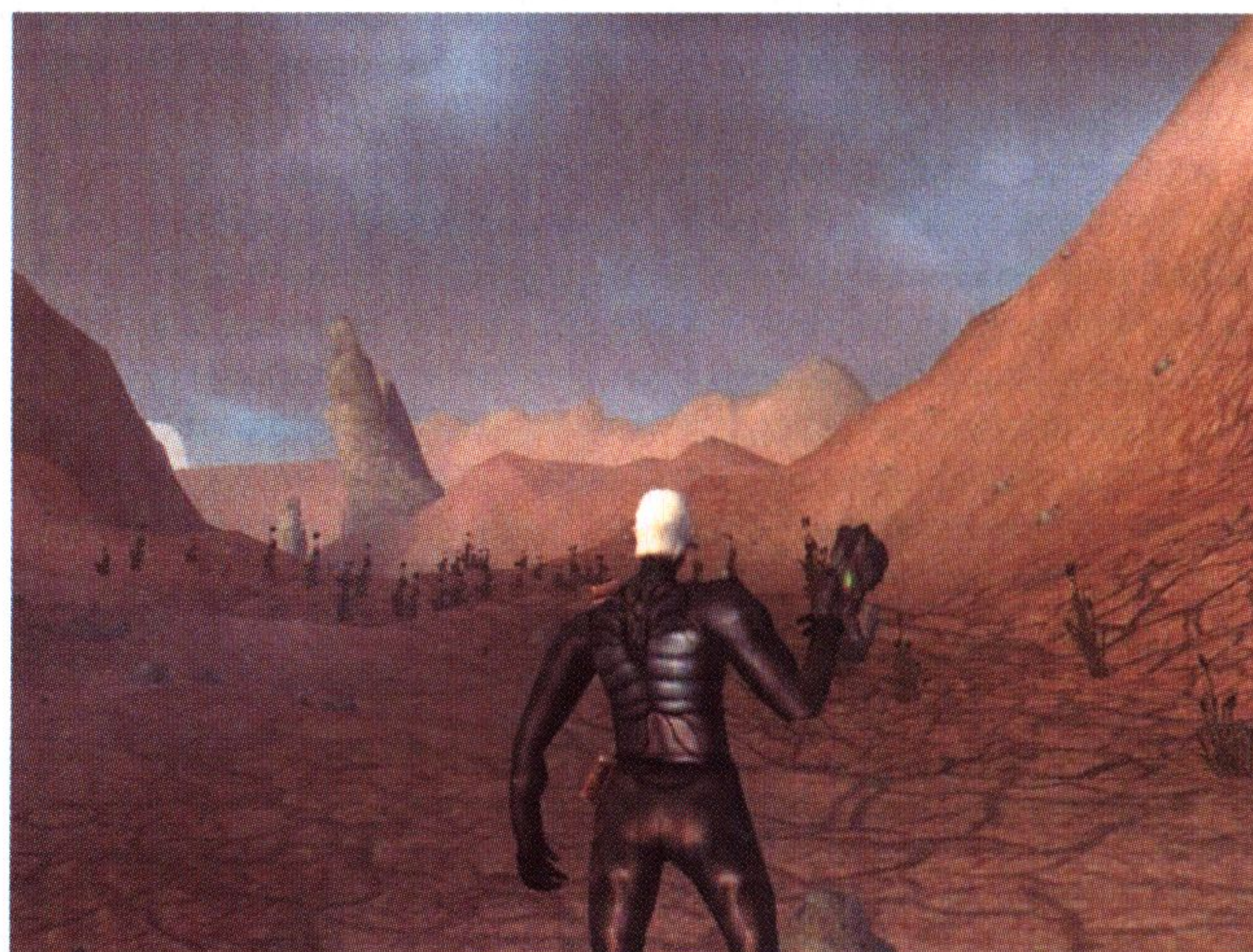
BATTLE ROYALE



Ascaron Software, the German developer behind the *Patrician* games, has announced a follow-up to its real-time trading series in the form of *Port Royale*. Gameplay will be near identical to *Patrician II*, but with a shift of setting to the Caribbean of the 16th and 17th centuries. Expect a greater emphasis on sea battles and piracy, as England, France, Spain and The Netherlands all vie for political supremacy. The game is set to ship in Germany this June, with an English release date to be confirmed.

Ground Zero

Aussie ingenuity goes massive online, with *Citizen Zero*



An ironic Australian influence is clear in the ex-prison setting and desertified environments. Even your vehicle is a 'little ripper'.

CITIZEN ZERO IS, if we're not very much mistaken, the first Australian massively multiplayer game. It's also one of the first of a new breed of action-oriented persistent world games that puts the hardcore role-playing in the back seat while the action takes the wheel. Which, for acronym buffs, makes it an MMOAAG (AA for action-adventure). It was also one of the highlights of this year's Games Developers Conference in San José.

The first thing that became obvious at GDC, when the chaps from Micro Forte (*Fallout Tactics*) fired up their game, is that the screenshots do it no justice at all. It's a truly splendid-looking game, powered by Micro Forte's revolutionary BigWorld MMOG technology, which is said to resolve MMO bandwidth problems to enable FPS-style graphics in a massive and continually expanding world. Obviously we can't verify that just yet, but the game is definitely a stunner.

Gameplay is equally refreshing. Set on the former prison planet Neo Eden and three neighbouring planets, it's a near-future sci-fi affair with an emphasis on complete freedom of action. Missions are assigned according to skills and performance, though you can choose between shorter, city-based missions and longer missions in the wilderness. Or, for those with particular talent, there will be specially tailored and epic quests spanning all four settled planets.

The combat, while not necessarily the focus of your experience, plays like a fully realised action game rather than an RPG, and the high-speed hover-bikes or 'rippers' that you use to jet around the place (or race in a fully fledged league) are simply spectacular.

The game also takes character interaction to new levels, allowing you to do things such as give your mate a boost on to a high wall, ask him to pull you up in return, then shake hands in gratitude. This is all great of course, but, we ask, why stop there? The world is waiting for the first online game in which you can buy someone a drink, give them a kiss, kick their knees in, have a shag... Technology has matured – it's time games did the same.

Citizen Zero certainly looks like a step in the right direction; we'll bring you a full preview when the stars are right.

Micro Forte • ETA Q3 2002 • www.citizen-zero.com

Enemy on the porch

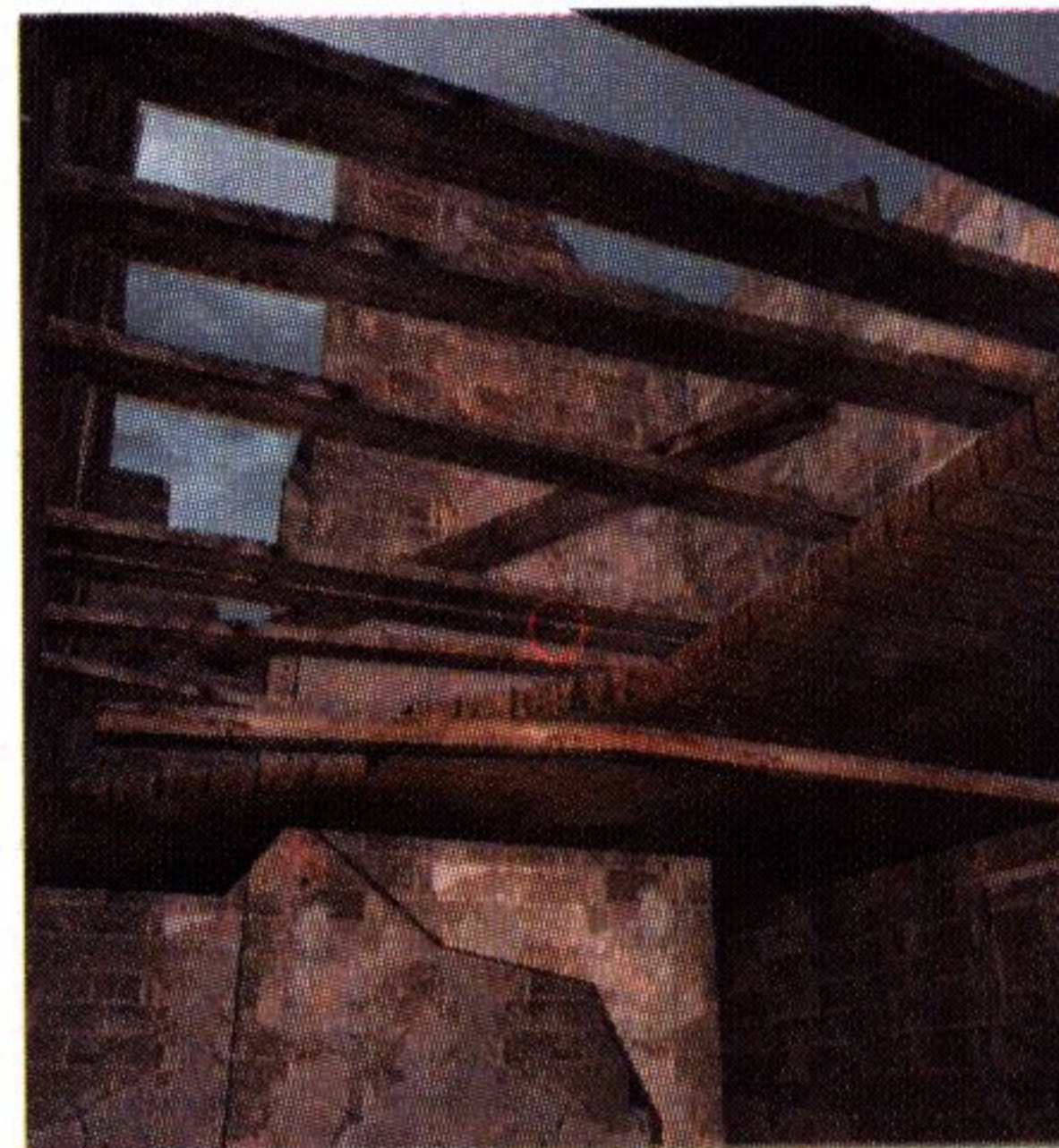
Strangely familiar sniper action revealed in *Stalingrad*

WHAT DO YOU do when you want to make a game based on a film, let's say *Enemy At The Gates*, but you can't afford the licence? Clearly, you make exactly the same game, but give it a slightly less catchy name that won't get you sued. That seems to be what French developer 4X Studios (*Iron Storm*) has done anyway, with its WWII sniper-shooter *Stalingrad*.

The game puts you behind the unwavering riflescope of a young Russian soldier blessed with amazing sniping skills, who for the purposes of this piece we'll call Vasili Z. The Nazis are closing in on the noble city of Stalingrad and it's up to you to gird your nation's flagging morale by launching a one-man counter-offensive with nothing but your trusty weapon and uncanny marksmanship to aid you. Apart from staying hidden and picking off lots of Nazis, you'll be called on to perform sabotage and spying missions, all the while building up your character's stats in areas such as stealth, accuracy, strength and stamina.

And just as a certain film featured snipers working co-operatively with other riflemen, *Stalingrad* too will offer a variety of co-operative multiplayer modes, the full nature of which the developer is keeping secret at this stage. Consider our interest piqued.

4X Studios • ETA TBC



Semi-detached townhouse, renovator's dream, plenty of sniping potential.

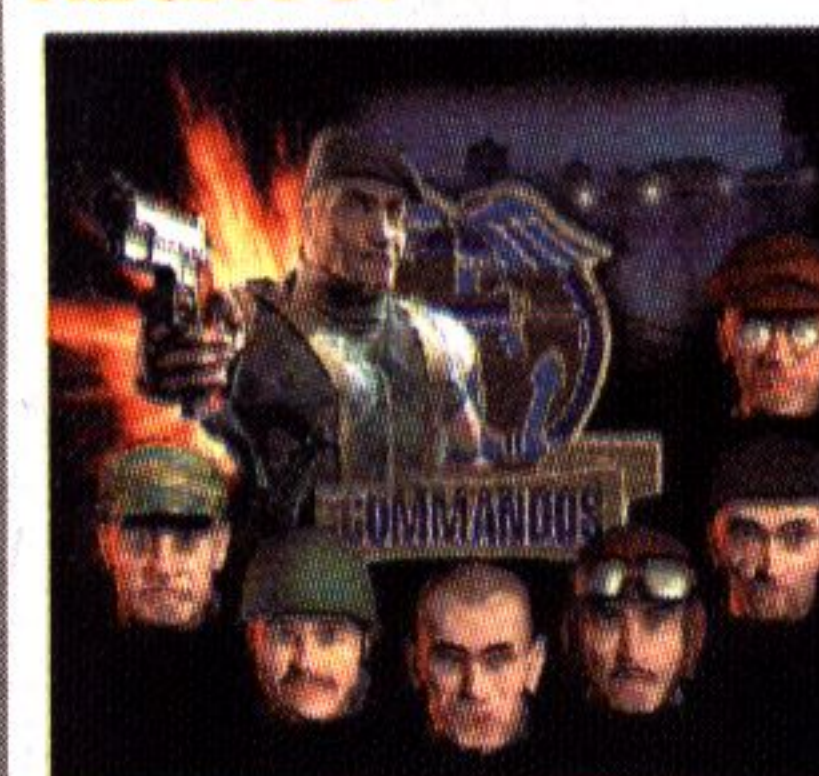
SHORTS

MMORPG PULPED

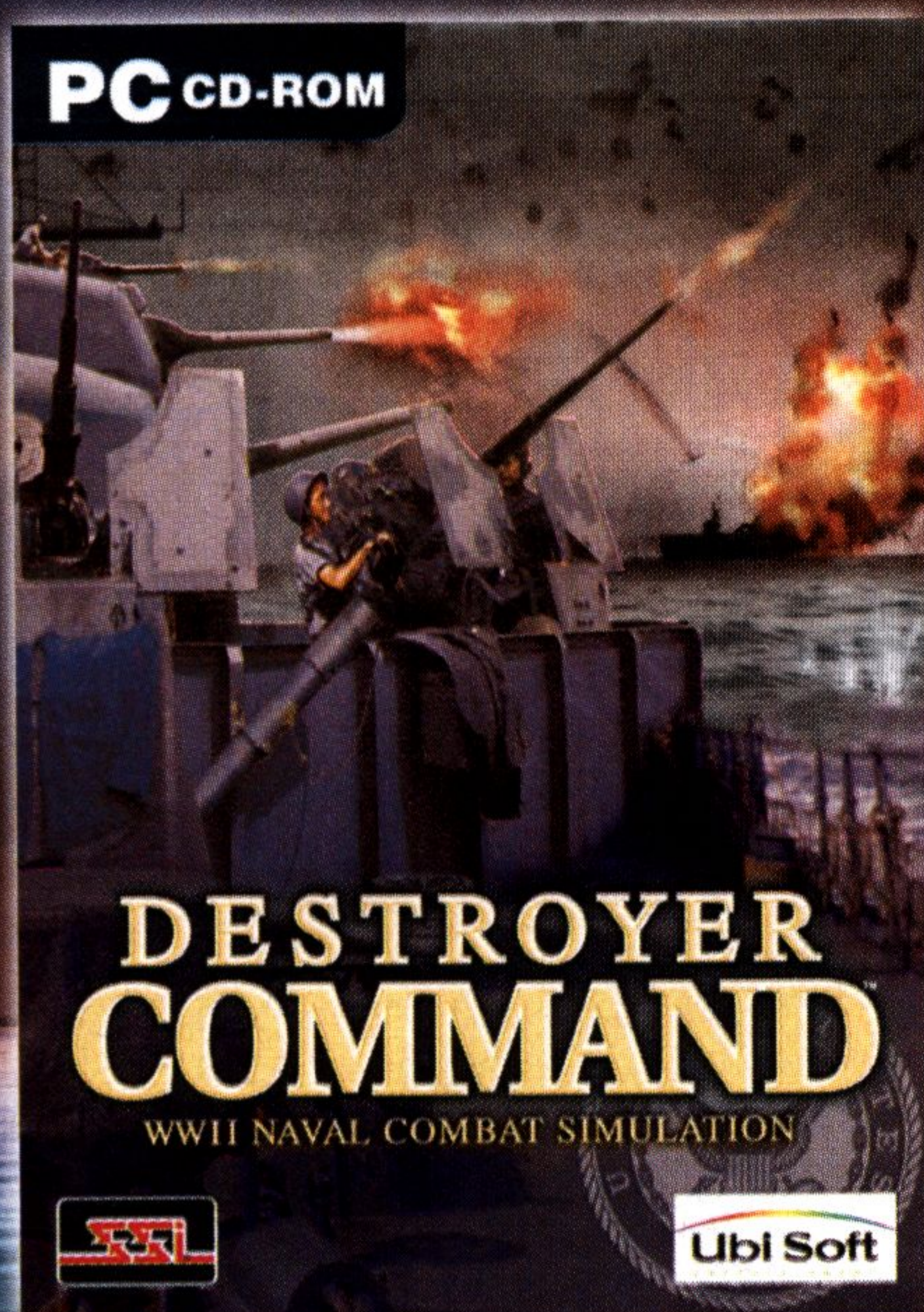


The hugely promising MMORPG *Lost Continents*, which hoped to create an online world in the tradition of the pulp fiction of the '30s and '40s, has been put on hold. Developer VR1 is re-evaluating the viability of the project, and will announce its conclusions shortly.

COMMANDOS REGROUP

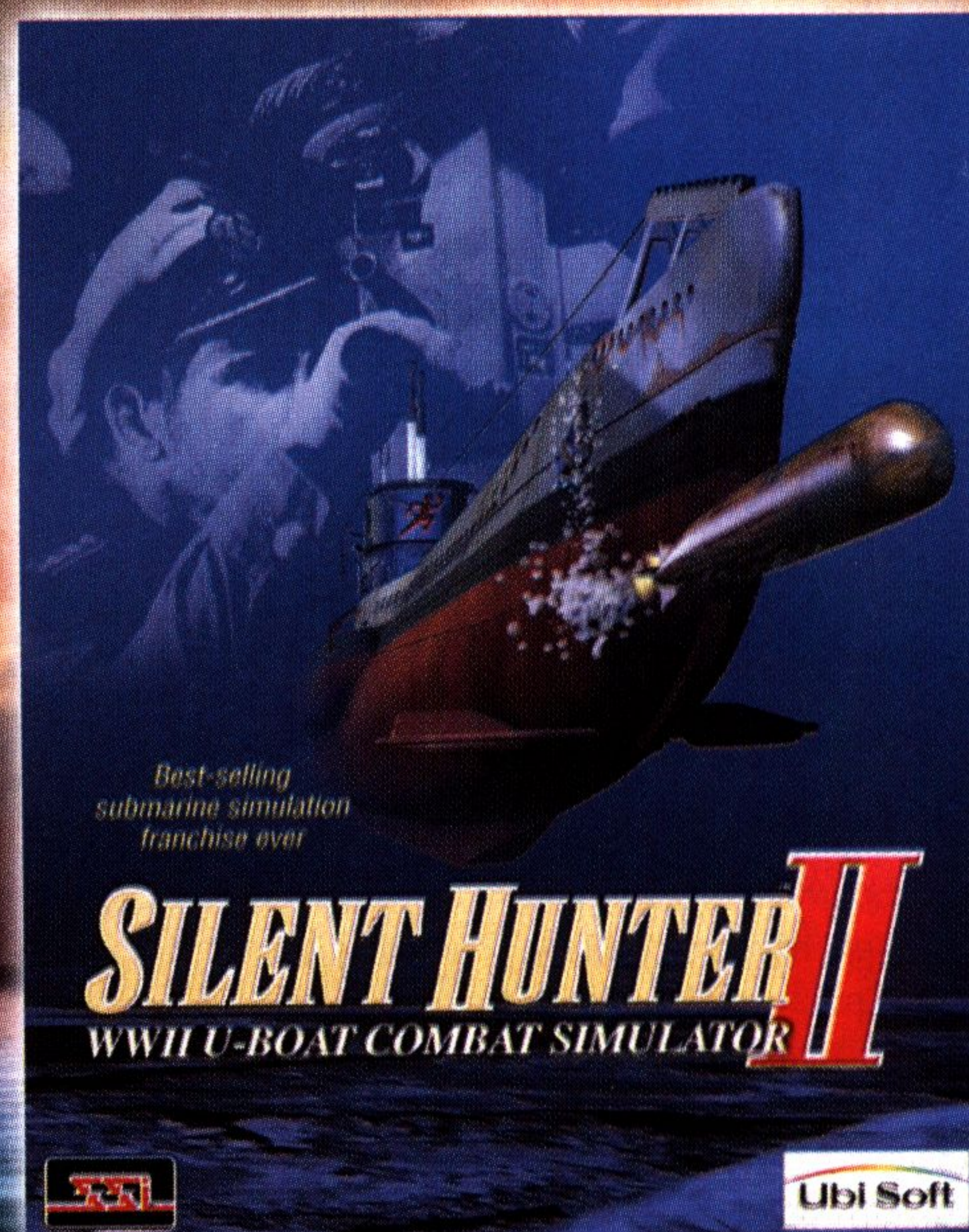


Eidos boss Ian Livingstone has revealed the future of the *Commandos* franchise, divulging details of a forthcoming sequel to the strategy series in a recent interview with *PC ZONE*. For more revelations, turn to our Oi! Livingstone, What's Your Game? feature on page 62.



"Two different games, one multiplayer battlefield. The most exciting moment in naval and submarine simulation history is approaching." -SubSim.com

Versus



www.destroyercommand.com

www.silenthunterII.com

Rule the Waves, Waive the Rules

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

THE WONDERFUL and frightening world of *EverQuest* has claimed yet another tragic victim. Minutes after logging off from the virtual reality 3D online goblin simulator, 21-year-old American **Shawn Woolley** turned a gun on himself and released the red mist of his psyche into the atmosphere, the hot leaden projectile terminating a squalid existence of solitude, obesity and despair, the last flicker of hope extinguished by a fantasy world of treachery and mistrust. It is not known whether he saved his game.

The suicide occurred last year, and the man's mother is attempting to sue **Sony Online Entertainment** in an effort to have warning labels put on the game. **Elisabeth Woolley** said: "It's like any other addiction. Either you die, go insane, or you quit. My son died." Already an epileptic, Woolley had also been diagnosed with depression and schizoid personality disorder. Having quit his pizza parlour job to play up to 12 hours a day, the theory is that he may have been pushed over the edge by events within the game, such as the time that an associate of six months stole his character's money and refused to give it back. His mother recalled: "He was so upset, he was in tears. He was so depressed, and I was trying to say: 'Shawn, it's only a game.' I said he couldn't trust those people."

"Minutes after logging off from *EverQuest*, Shawn Woolley turned a gun on himself"

This case has also brought to light a further *EverQuest*-related incident involving a college student who played the game for 36 consecutive hours. Sleep deprivation led to a psychotic breakdown in which he hallucinated that characters had come out of the game and were chasing him. He was discovered running through his neighbourhood swatting invisible demons. Sony has yet to comment on either case, although they have announced that they are increasing subscription rates for the game.

Sad news reaches us of once-respected developer **Steve Screech**, whose mental state appears to be unravelling in a similar fashion to his career. Following **PC ZONE**'s objective review of his £7.99 remake of *Kick Off*, Screech posted a paranoid, unprofessional, grammatically aberrant, factually incorrect and possibly libellous message on the official *Kick Off 2002* website. Screech screeched: "Just seen the review and suprise suprise [sic] the reviewer is Steve Hill, this guy is on *Championship Manager*'s f***ing payroll from all accounts, he is the biggest twat that ever reviewed a footygame, unless it is a big f***ing company that hands out nice wads you won't get jack shit from this guy."

Someone who actually is on *Championship Manager*'s payroll is potato-headed former **Liverpool** and **Republic of Ireland** midfielder, **Ray Houghton**, who has signed up as a consultant for forthcoming masterpiece, *CM4*. Houghton secured the job immediately after leaving **Crystal Palace**, coincidentally supported by Steve Screech, who is expected to interpret the move as a personal slur and throw the rest of his toys out of the pram.

Evil eye

Mummies return and tombs are raided as a familiar story unfolds...

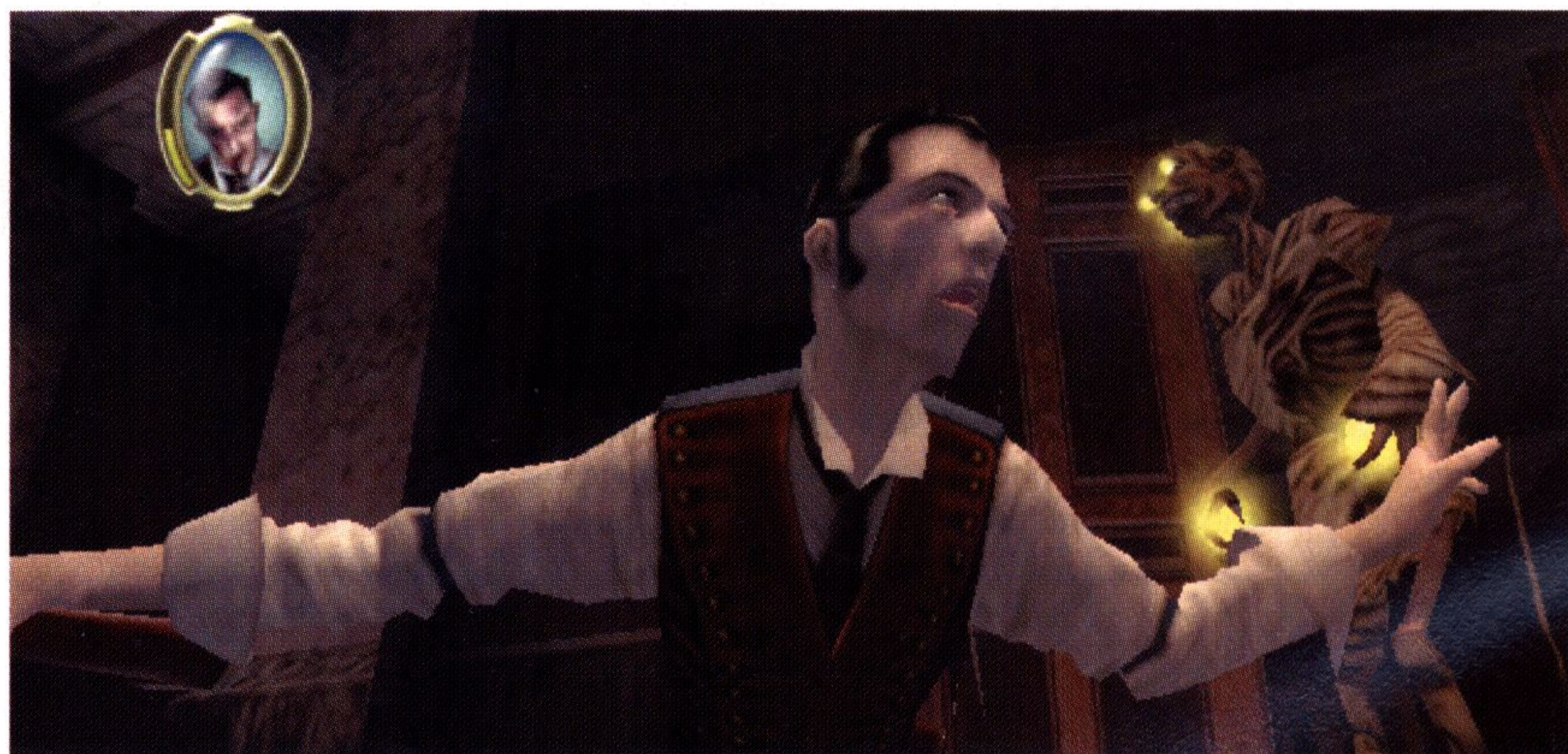
LURKING SOMEWHERE BETWEEN *Alone In The Dark*, *Tomb Raider* and *Resident Evil*, *Curse: The Eye Of Isis* is a 'stomach-churning' survival horror set in the 19th century. You enter the scene as engineer Darien Dane, an expert in Victorian technologies, on a mad scramble from London to the Egyptian Pyramids to retrieve a stolen statue known unsurprisingly as The Eye of Isis.

Along the way you can call upon the help of your beautiful clairvoyant cohort known as Verity Sutton (a Bond girl name if we ever heard one) and take on all manner of freshly re-animated adversaries such as mummies, zombies and even stuffed bears. You see, the curse in question is in

fact a vaporous entity, the kind that gains form by possessing bodies and inanimate objects, such as stuffed animals. Needless to say, it will also do its damndest to possess you, and in addition to a health bar, there'll be a curse bar gauging your level of exposure to the threat. A full bar means game over, so you'll have to be doubly wary.

It may all sound a little on the formulaic side, but the action/adventure horror market is not overly crowded at the moment and it's always nice to welcome some new blood – so to speak.

Asylum Entertainment • ETA October 2002 • www.cursegame.com



It's never easy getting the curse for the first time...

Alien resurrection

Aftermath or before geography? Aliens don't care, they'll land any time



New UFO screens! (*Not representative of actual gameplay.)



Fans can rest assured that gameplay will at the very least be reminiscent of X-Com.

LAST ISSUE, in case you missed it, we took a look back at one of the greatest strategy games of all time, *UFO: Enemy Unknown*, aka *X-Com*. We've also been tracking what was to be the stunning 3D sequel to the *X-Com* series for a couple of years now, from its initial incarnation as *Dreamland Chronicles* to its eventual cancellation and reappearance as *UFO: Freedom Ridge* at Czech developer Altar Interactive. Unsurprisingly, the game has now undergone another name change to *UFO: Aftermath*, a title that seems to

ground it even more firmly in its role as spiritual successor to *X-Com*. It's still in development at Altar, but from all indications it has abandoned all of the original code and started again from scratch – check out the early concept art for proof.

Of course the basic concept remains in place: aliens have invaded the Earth and it's up to you to destroy them, with a combination of global strategy (research, occupying territories, shooting down UFOs) and small squad-based tactical combat, in full 3D. There will also

be a very strong RPG aspect to the game with a big emphasis on character-driven gameplay.

At this stage Altar is not ready to reveal too many other details about the game, and they remain cagey about how faithful it will be to the *X-Com* tradition. But who knows – the art direction is promising enough, and maybe it will be even better than its forebears.

Altar Interactive • ETA late 2002 •
www.altarinteractive.com

Low blow

Mindless carnage is back in fashion, with *BlowOut*

YOU CAN STICK your 'thinker-shooters', your 'stealth action' and your 'squad-based tactics'; it's all about big guns and messy gibs. Or so says developer DiezelPower anyway, with the announcement of its third-person blast 'em up, *BlowOut*. Described as a "non-stop, 3D action combo of *Doom*, *Abuse* and *Starship Troopers*", *BlowOut* is about the dumbest thing we've seen for a while, but could be a fun diversion nonetheless.

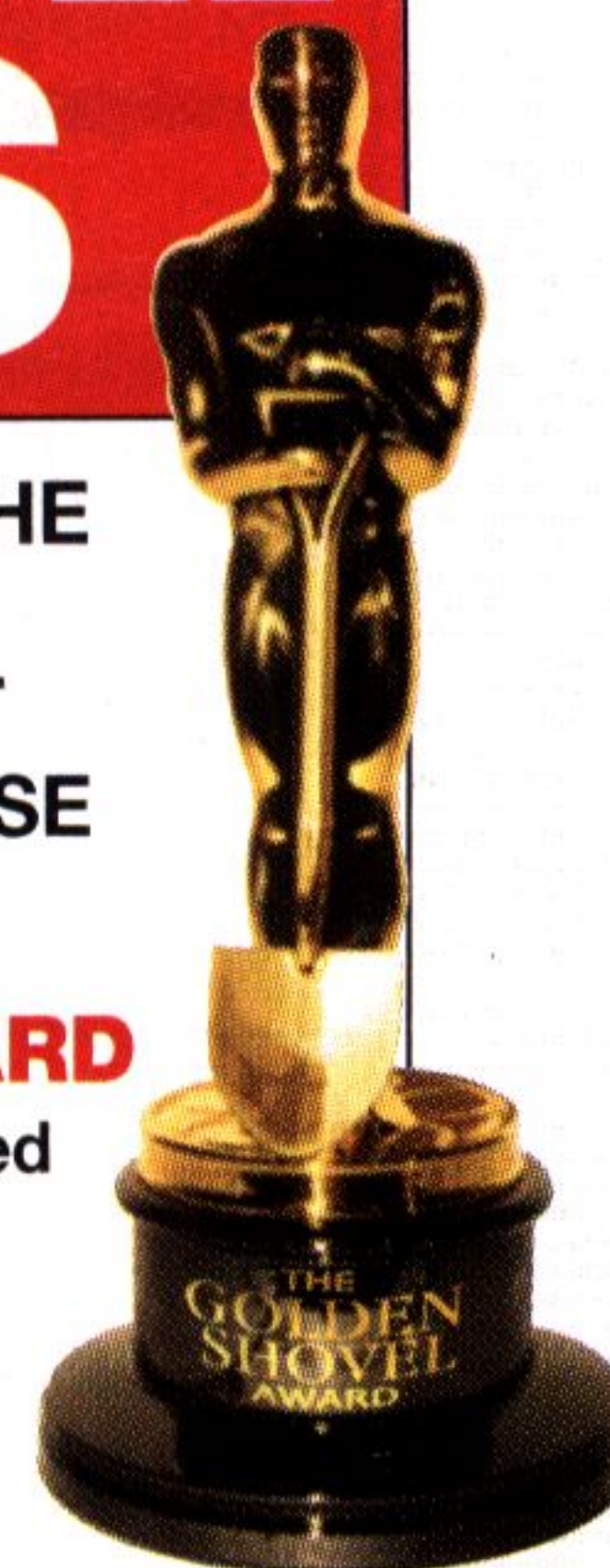
Promising an innovative 360-degree control method, the game offers a predictable mixture of slimy aliens and dirty, metallic sci-fi environments, with plenty of secret areas hidden behind destroyable walls and floors. A blatantly id-inspired arsenal of weapons includes a chainsaw, shotgun, nailgun, plasma rifle and flamethrower, suitably complemented by a "super-heavy industrial soundtrack." And we wonder why the kids of today are turning bad...

DiezelPower • ETA TBC •
www.blowoutgame.com



Industrial-strength B-grade action.

GOLDEN SHOVEL AWARDS



REPRISING AN OLD PC ZONE REGULAR, THE COVETED GOLDEN SHOVEL AWARDS ARE BESTOWED UPON ANYONE WHO DOESN'T JUST SHOVEL BULLSHIT, THEY HAVE TO USE BOTH HANDS TO DO IT

DESPERATE DAMAGE CONTROL AWARD

Press release, March 8: "Utilising NovaLogic's updated *Land Warrior* engine, *Task Force Dagger* has been designed by Zombie as an entirely new game with new characters, weapons, and single and multiplayer levels."

– NovaLogic on their new Delta Force game, before press and public had seen the god-awful screenshots

Press release, March 22: "Utilising NovaLogic's updated *Land Warrior* engine, *Task Force Dagger* has been designed by Zombie Studios as a standalone mission pack with new characters, weapons and single and multiplayer levels."

– NovaLogic on their new Delta Force game (sorry, mission pack), after the screenshots had been universally ridiculed. (Clearly it's less embarrassing to have a crap looking add-on than whole new game.)

BITING THE HAND THAT FEEDS IT AWARD

"We'll be different from *Metal Gear Solid 2*. We're making *Splinter Cell* for a public that is... a little bit more discerning."

– Ubi Soft's *Splinter Cell* team do their best to insult their target audience while discussing their number one reference point.

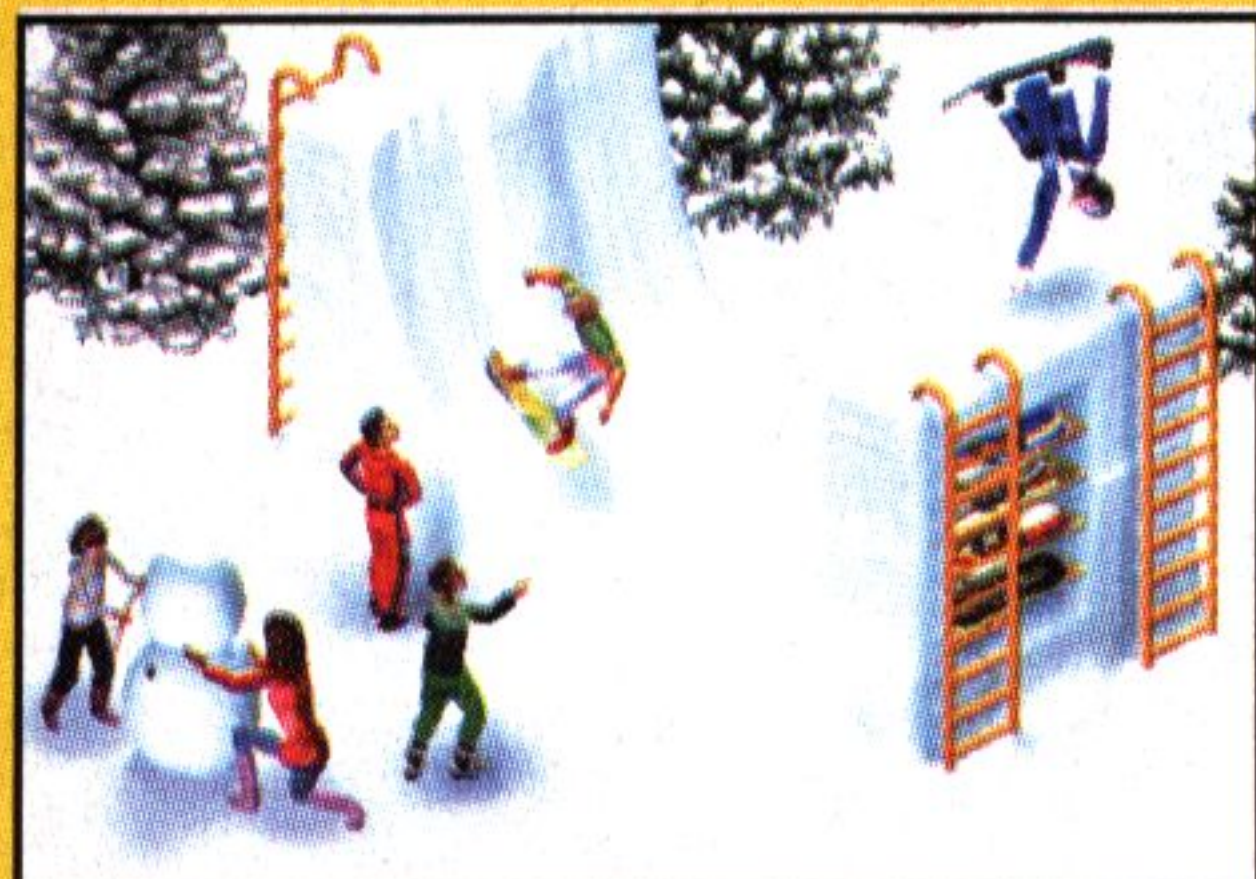
CHARTS

In association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

Your one-touch guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it

ChartTrack

TOP 10



		TITLE	WEEKS IN CHART	SCORE
1	NEW	THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY	1	66%
2	NEW	STAR WARS: JEDI KNIGHT II – JEDI OUTCAST	2	91%
3	▼	MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT	8	94%
4	▼	THE SIMS: HOT DATE	20	71%
5	▲	THE SIMS	113	86%
6	▼	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02	26	92%
7	NEW	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS 3	3	N/A
8	▼	COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE	6	73%
9	▲	THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY	53	50%
10	▲	ZOO TYCOON	23	48%

YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

What's happened to *Warrior Kings*? Doesn't everyone realise what a huge milestone this game is for the RTS genre? Don't let the lack of hype fool you – this game is the business.
prolapse

I'm glad *MoHAA* is still there. *C&C: Renegade* with crap reviews all over the place still manages a respectful eighth, but I'm not buying it. *Jedi Knight II* deserves to be up there and with its legions of fans it may well be there this summer.
bunngod

Forget number one. Buy number two if you liked number three. Buy number three today – if you don't like it get an Xbox.
Goose64

How can *Half-Life* still be selling so many copies? Surely it can't become the seventh most desirable PC game on the market again just because they added *Blue Shift*, which was meant to be free in the first place anyway.
the_glove

Virgin megastores

TOP 10

COMPETITION

Virgin megastores

- 1 THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY
- 2 STAR WARS: JEDI KNIGHT II – JEDI OUTCAST
- 3 MONSTERS, INC. MINI GAMES
- 4 MONSTERS, INC. MONSTROPOLIS MISSION
- 5 MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
- 6 HOOLIGANS: STORM OVER EUROPE
- 7 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02
- 8 MAX PAYNE
- 9 COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE
- 10 STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER

Win the entire Virgin Top 10!

Once again, **PC ZONE** and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

QUESTION: What's the name of the lead character in *Jedi Knight II – Jedi Outcast*?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below.

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Are you a current subscriber to *PC Zone*?

Answers on a postcard to: PC Zone Chart Compo (CPCZ6A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: May 30 2002

Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART-TRACK TOP 10

WHAT A SURPRISE. A new *Sims* add-on goes straight to the top of the charts. And pulls the rest of the godforsaken series up with it (*Living It Up* hovers dangerously at number 11, and *Sims* bundles occupy the 16th and 17th spots as well). How is Will Wright not the Overlord of the world or some such by now? Just imagine if Microsoft and not EA had picked up the *Sim* franchise all those years ago. Will and Bill would own us all by now, and we'd live in a candy cane pick-and-mix virtual world that crashed every day and left us hanging in blue limbo. Or maybe we'd all be forced to live in pastel houses with cut-away roofs, sporting dishevelled bowl haircuts and wearing coke-bottle specs, while all the while Bill flew overhead, herding us from place to place with a giant cursor, laughing maniacally and screaming "Who's the geek now, huh?" It's worth thinking about.

Few surprises elsewhere, though the new *Generations 3* bundle, now including *Blue Shift*, seems to have done the trick for the ageing *Half-Life* legend. *Harry Potter* and *Monsters, Inc* seem to have run their course, while *HOMM IV* doesn't even register a blip. Anthony Holden

MISSING IN ACTION

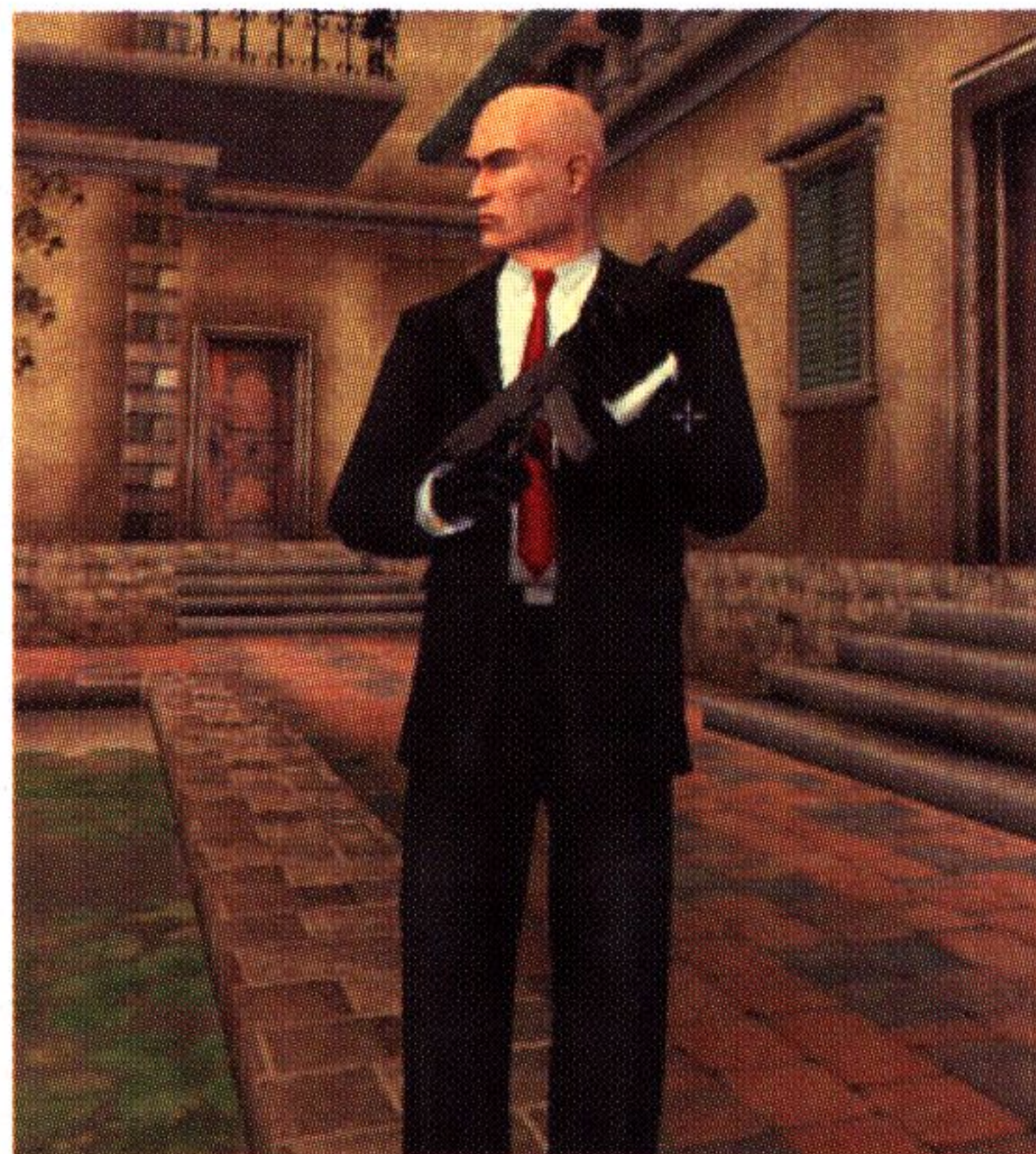
The war's not over until the last game comes home...



Blitz: Disc Arena

PROBABLY ONLY remembered by the most vicious and/or Swedish members of the Zone fraternity, this future sports combat game was originally uncovered way back in issue 97. A bone-crushing blend of *Speedball*, *Tekken* and *Quake III*, the game had plenty of promise even then, but in the months since we've barely heard a peep from Swedish developer Southend Interactive. However, the game has not been canned as feared, merely renamed and re-targeted to Xbox. Now called *Deathrow*, the game is due to be released this autumn by Ubi Soft, who has assured us that it's still coming out on PC.

SouthEnd Interactive • ETA autumn • www.southend-interactive.com



Hitman 2: Silent Assassin

WE'VE BEEN PROMISING you a review of this stealth shooter "next issue" for about three months now, and it's not just because we like to keep you guessing. The contract-killing sequel simply wasn't finished when its projected March release date rolled round, so the developers have been given a note from the teacher and an extension until (wait for it) September. The only explanation offered by publisher Eidos is that the game was delayed "in an effort to make *Hitman 2* the best game it could be." That old story...

IO Interactive • ETA September • www.hitman2.com



Counter-Strike: Condition Zero

LIKE THE PROVERBIAL ass and carrot, *Condition Zero* is another game we've been dangling in front of your noses for some months now, and we were pretty sure it was going to hit this issue, in time for its revised April deadline. When we last saw the game it looked nigh on finished, but apparently some problems were exposed in the AI, and the game has been held back for further extensive testing and tweaking.

Gearbox Software • ETA August/September • www.gearboxsoftware.com

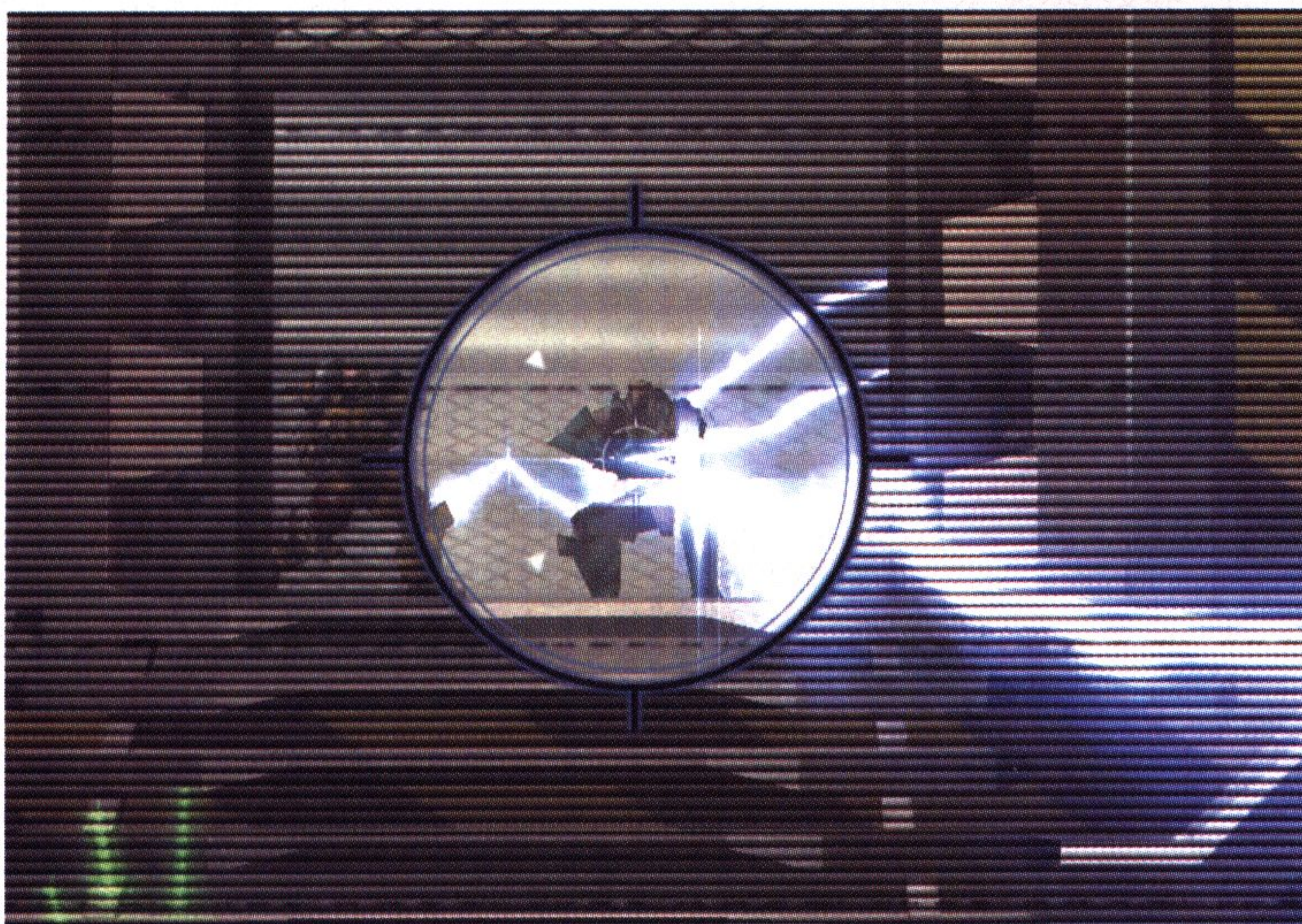
US TOP 10

- 1 C&C: RENEGADE
- 2 MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
- 3 THE SIMS
- 4 THE SIMS: HOT DATE
- 5 NASCAR RACING 2002 SEASON
- 6 HARRY POTTER & THE SORCERER'S STONE
- 7 ROLLER COASTER TYCOON
- 8 BRIDGE COMMANDER
- 9 RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
- 10 CIVILIZATION III

INCOMING!

These are the big games that are going on sale in the next month or so. All dates are correct at the time of going to press, but we'd check ahead before running down to the shops in the driving rain.

GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
Global Operations	EA	May 3
Sid Meier's SimGolf	EA	May 3
Soldier Of Fortune II	Activision	May 17
Freedom Force	EA	May 24
F1 2002	EA	May 24
Grand Theft Auto III	Take2	May 24
Diehard: Nakatomi Plaza	Vivendi	May 28
Mafia	Take2	May 31
Anno 1503	EA	June 7
Spider-Man The Movie	Activision	June 7



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003

But don't panic... you're not going to have to wait that long to get your hands on it

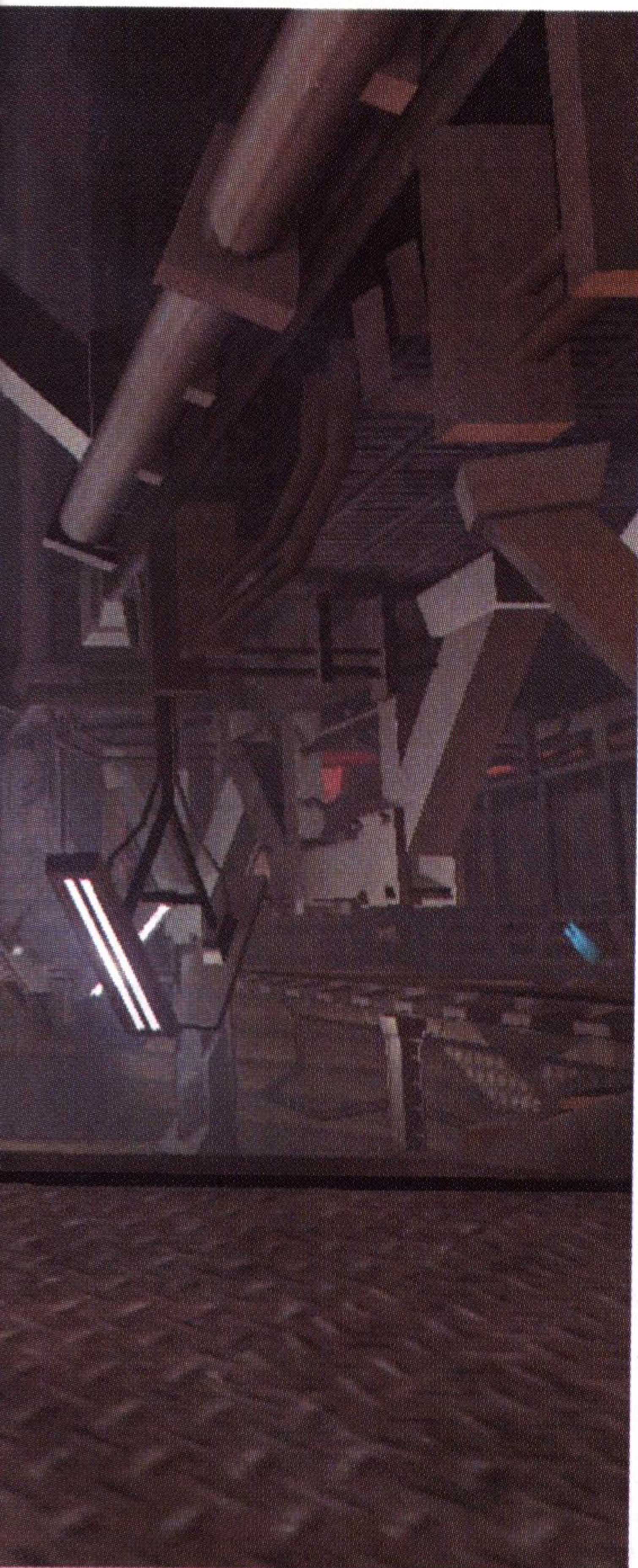
FIRST THERE WAS *Unreal II*, the sequel to the ground-breaking FPS that promised to deliver single and multiplayer fragging in spades. Then we heard a rumour about the existence of *Unreal Tournament 2*, the sequel to the multiplayer-only ZONE favourite that was due to follow. Then just to make it even more confusing, we were told that *Unreal II* was going to be called *Unreal Episode II* and that it wasn't going to feature multiplayer. Then *Unreal Tournament 2* turned into *Unreal Tournament 2003*, despite the fact that it's going to be released in June 2002.

And just to make matters worse we've all heard of a game called *Unreal Warfare*, due possibly at some point next year. What are they trying to do, mess with our heads?

They needn't have bothered because the latest batch of screenshots from *Unreal Tournament 2003* has already done it good and proper. They don't need an introduction, just take a look, and while you're at it bear in mind that we've just been whisked away to a secret location for a three-hour fragfest with the latest code – and it plays just as good as it looks. Jealous? **PCZ**

Digital Extremes • ETA June • www.digitalextremes.com







Bartle and Trubshaw – the original online gurus.

PHONE AGE MAN

THE EVOLUTION OF ONLINE GAMING

Love them or loathe them, online games have been screeching down the phone lines since before the first PC booted into life. From the first multi-user dungeons to today's massively multiplayer games and mods, *Mike Anderiesz* takes a look back at more than three decades of multiplayer mayhem

TO THE PEDANTIC, the history of online games goes all the way back to 1969 when a two-player version of *Space Wars* – the world's first ever computer game – was adapted to run on an embryonic networking system known as Plato. Other titles followed and the network was supporting around 1,000 players within three years – a landmark achievement for the time.

However, as far as genuinely public-access, proper online gaming is concerned,

history began in 1978 with two students from Colchester University – inconveniently named after a firm of chartered accountants. Bartle and Trubshaw (Richard and Roy to their friends) struggled for years to explain and expound their vision for multiplayer adventuring to a disbelieving industry and their rollercoaster ride from rags to promised riches pretty much sums up the way online games have developed ever since. For every success there have been a dozen abject failures, for every

ruling empire, an unruly mob trying to tear it down. Online gaming has always been in a state of perpetual revolution and some would argue this is how it should remain. Others, however, maintain the absence of true stability has held online gaming back long enough. So where did it all start and where do we go from here?

THE PRIMORDIAL MUD

Trubshaw first came up with the idea of a Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) in 1978, at a

time when the Web was little more than a glint in Tim Berners-Lee's eye and the rest of us were happy playing two-player *Pong*. Bartle arrived later to expand the original design, which would debut on Compunet in 1985 and later be revised for a full-scale launch backed by BT – newly privatised and back then one of the leading games publishers in Europe.

"As has happened so often since," recalls Bartle, "MUD became the pioneering trailblazer that paved the way

1958



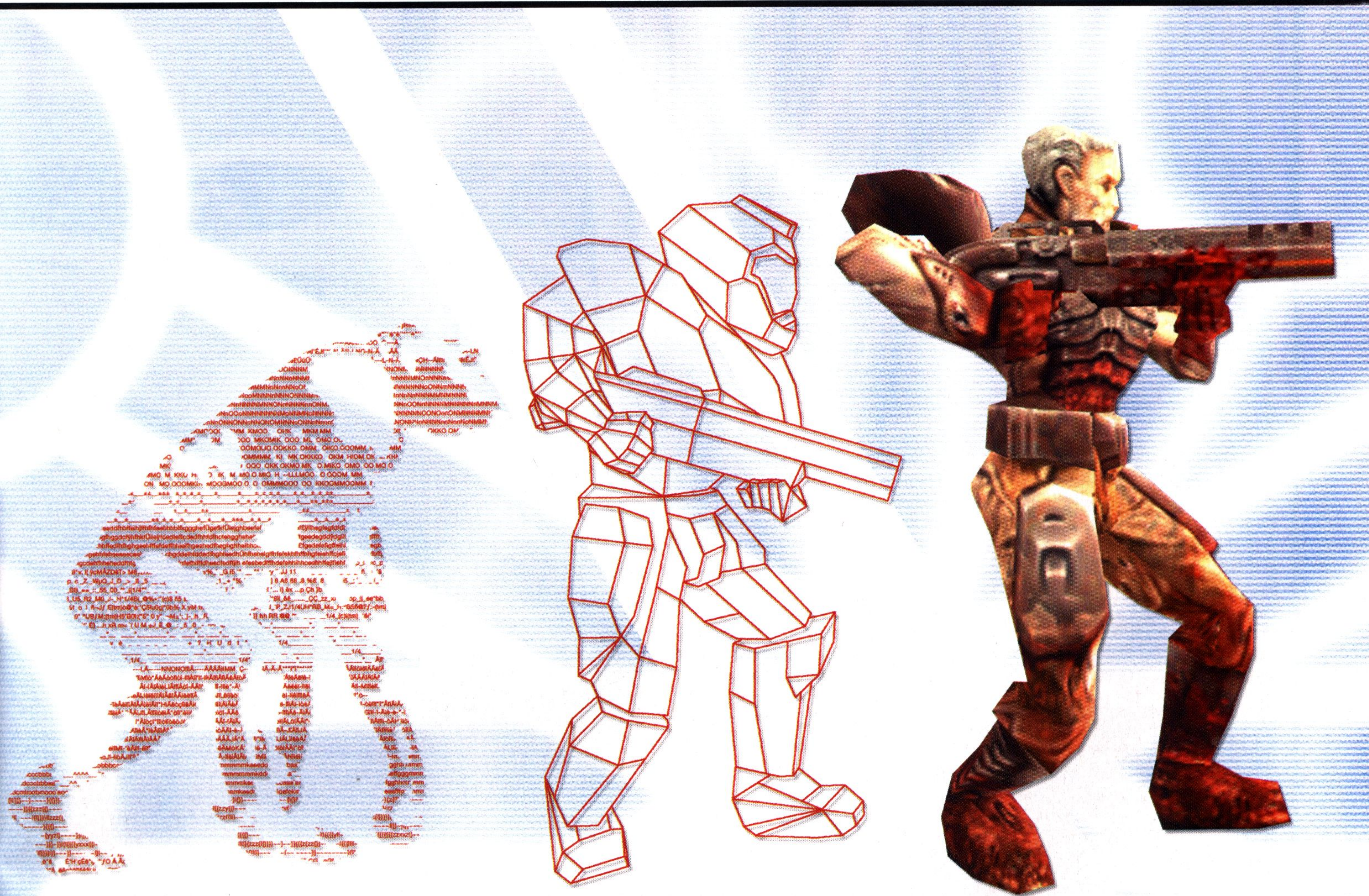
First commercially available modem launched. The Bell Dataphone had a top speed of 300bps.

1969



Rick Blomme develops two-player *Space War* over PLATO network.





for some other game to make the money. Roy and I are not business-oriented people, so we knew from the beginning we'd be out of our depth."

Unfortunately, BT was also out of its depth. Even though MUD was only text-based it still needed massive amounts of processing power, which meant harnessing a then-ninja PDP11 main-frame computer during downtime. Consequently, the game was only available after midnight and frequently

beset by crashes and technical problems. Moreover, with the fastest modems still clocking no more than 2600bps (around 200 times slower than a current 56Kbps modem) the playing experience was often tantamount to watching paint dry.

Most significantly, with e-commerce still over a decade away, the system of paying by cheque via post never appealed to more than a hardcore of 200 or so players. It quickly became clear that MUD was at least a decade ahead of its time.

BT pulled the plug, as it did on the rest of its software activities, but selfishly kept hold of the licence and the two godfathers of online role-playing were forced to see their hard work languishing on the shelf while their business manager and friend was emptying the corporate bank account. By the time the one-time chum had finally succumbed to manic depression and suicide, other games had rifled MUD's twitching corpse and stolen its best ideas, leaving the duo with a

franchise that could have been bigger than *Ultima* or *EverQuest* but now looked like an ancient artefact.

"We weren't, and still aren't, bitter about it" concludes Bartle, "although obviously it was frustrating. It was just one of those things – well, half a dozen of those things!"

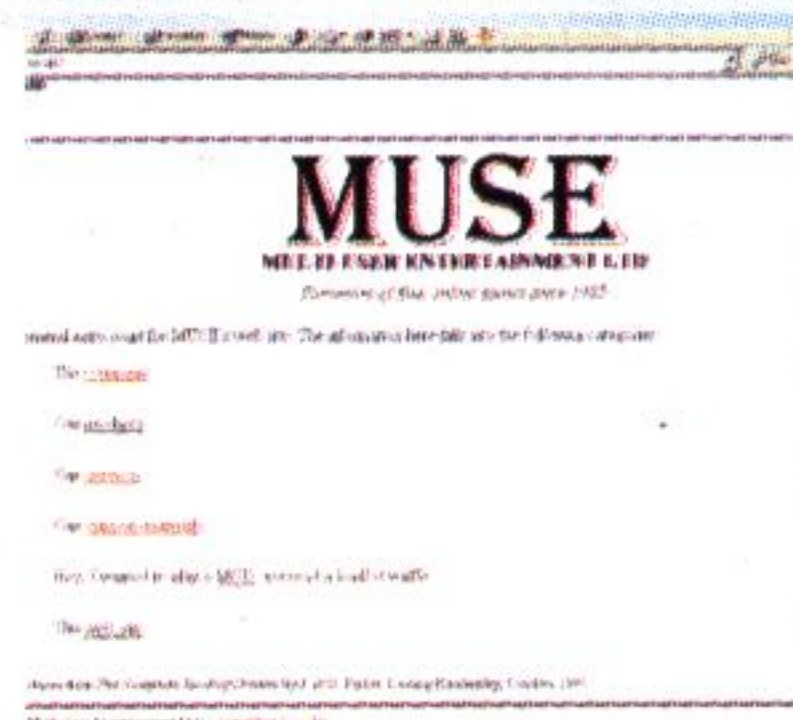
Although MUD was much imitated, and modern variations are still around today (see www.mud.co.uk), multiplayer gaming stood still for the best part of a

1978



Roy Trubshaw begins work on MUD. Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Handbook published, laying down the framework for the majority of MMORPGs.

1984



MUD launches on CompuNet in UK and CompuServe in the US – where it still runs today.

1986



MUD2 launched by BT – the first UK pay-for-play game.

1990

decade as it watched subsequent and ever more powerful home computers and consoles pass by until modem speeds and the PC caught up. Only then could the concept of multi-user dungeoneering move into the massively multiplayer age.

THE AGE OF ULTIMA

By 1990, Richard Garriot was already a legend in RPG gaming thanks to his hugely popular *Ultima* series. *Ultima* was significant because it came complete with a thriving fan-base whose loyalty made the prospect of *Ultima Online* far more financially viable than MUD. Building on the groundwork made by games like *Terris* and *Meridian 59*, *Ultima Online* finally launched in 1997. It was the first credible massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG); a living, breathing world where true virtual communities and careers could be maintained. Before *Ultima* adventures and RPGs were defined by their statistical or

thematic logic: Object X always worked with Object Y to bring about event Z, but the addition of random players constantly testing the game structure for weaknesses, exposed the underbelly of game design like never before. At first this sense of potential anarchy was incredibly appealing: Who could forget that dark day in 1998 when Lord British (Garriot's not-so-secret identity in *Ultima Online*) was assassinated by disloyal barons in his own castle? While gamers were bemused, the media loved it. In due course, however, player anarchy was to prove a considerable obstacle to gameplay, in *UO*'s case, paving the way for arch-rival *EverQuest*'s dominance.

Encouraged by *UO*'s ground-breaking success and ever-increasing numbers of Internet users, other rivals to *UO*'s throne emerged – most notably Verant's *EverQuest*. Released in 1999, it was notable not just for being the easiest MMORPG to get into, but also for the wholehearted support of a patron with genuinely deep pockets (Sony). With almost 400,000 players – 40 per cent of whom are apparently female – *EverQuest* remains a huge success, far more so than the aging *UO* with its paltry quarter of a million subscribers.

But inevitably the passing of the first age of MMORPGs involved the fall of Garriot himself. Having sold his beloved Origin to EA in 1999, the marriage quickly turned sour.

"EA acquired Origin to be their PC saviours," he recalled "As such, we grew the company very quickly – too quickly. We did not manage the growth well, and soon



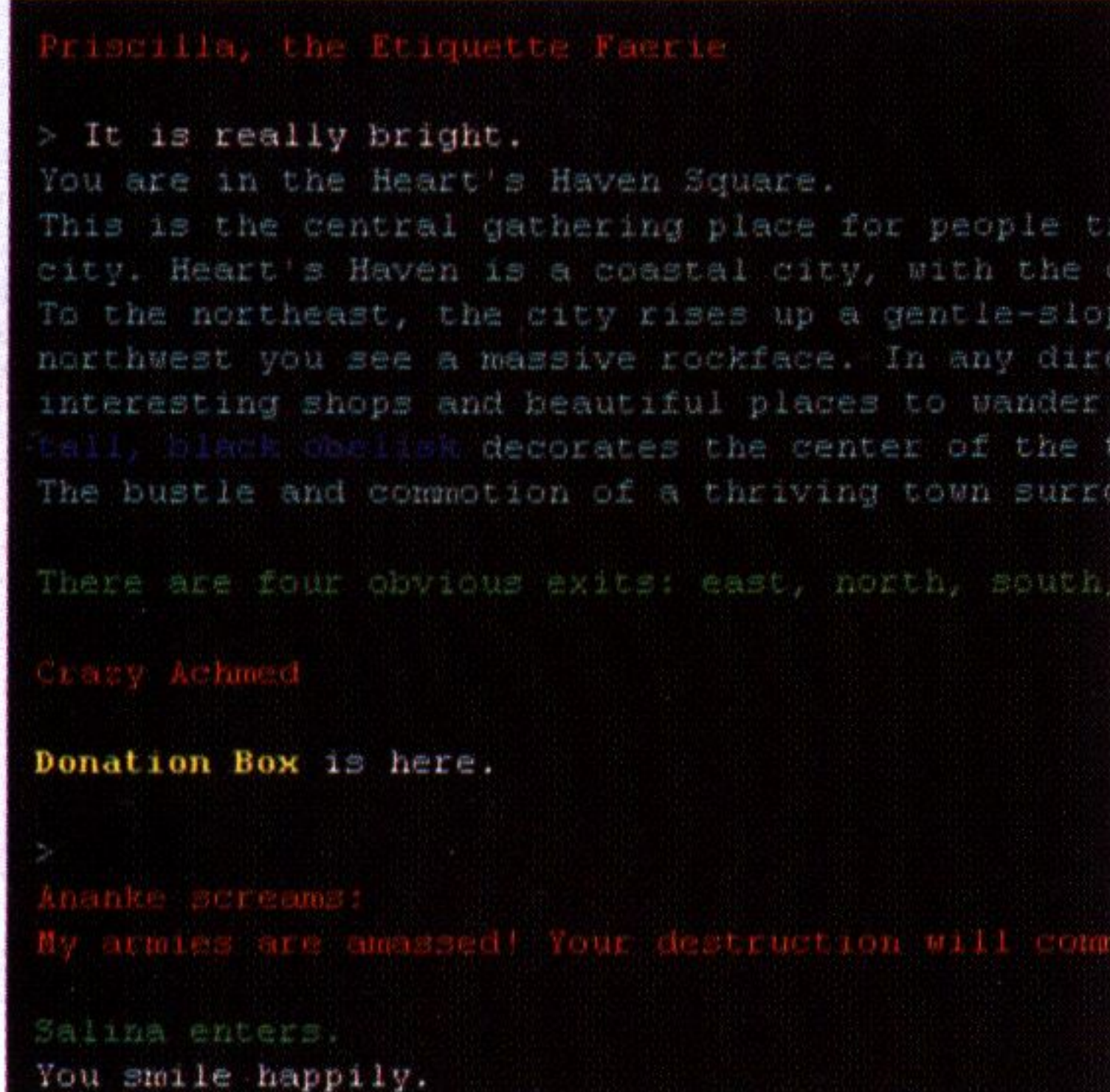
Richard Garriot: aka Lord British.



DEPECHE MODEM

KEEPING UP WITH THE NEED FOR SPEED

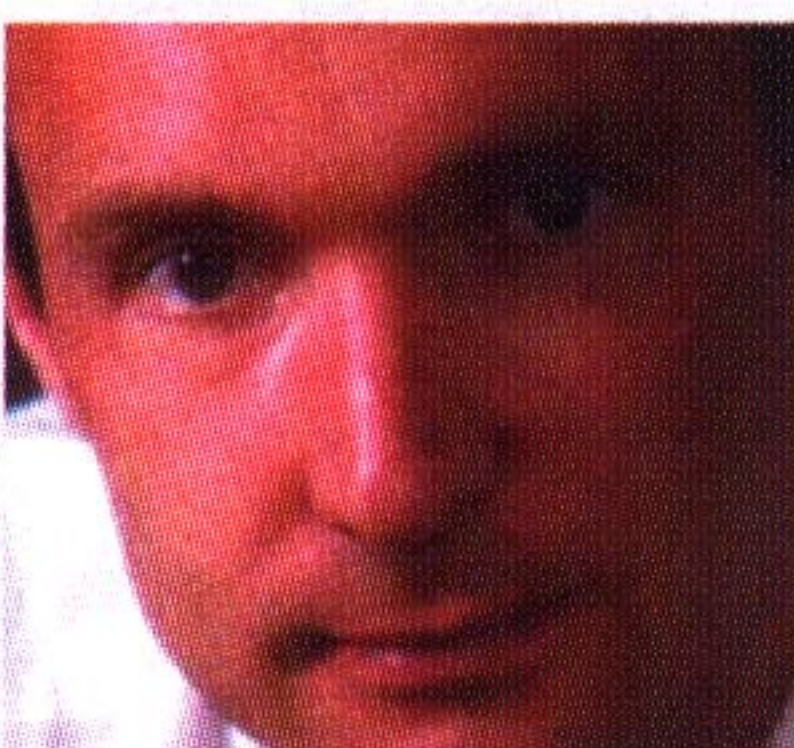
These days it takes far longer for a PC to splutter to life than it does to connect to the Internet. In fact, you could probably load a game on your old Spectrum in the time it takes for a PC to boot up, and yet, with today's broadband connections you can be snooping around half a dozen PCs spread from Connecticut to Casablanca within a few seconds. It wasn't always so. Early modems could squeeze bytes down a telephone line at a rate of 2,600 a second, today's antiquated models can manage 560,000 and even that isn't enough for today's games. The analogue modems of old are a thing of the past, it is physically impossible to exceed the 56Kbps speed limit without buying into broadband – although there are a few technical tricks to get around the problem. However, although broadband is the future, it's been a little slow in coming, but very soon it will be the only way to get around and already ADSL is required to play online at a decent speed. But speed comes at a cost – annual subscription. Add to that the added price of subscriptions to online games and/or the cost of hooking up with commercial game services offering high speed servers and it's clear that already online gaming has found a benefactor: you.



MUDs are still going strong.

1990

1991



Tim Berners-Lee creates the world wide web.

1993



id Software releases *Doom* – the beginning of FPS gaming, death-matches and MOD culture. Global Internet usage reaches the 3 million mark.

1995



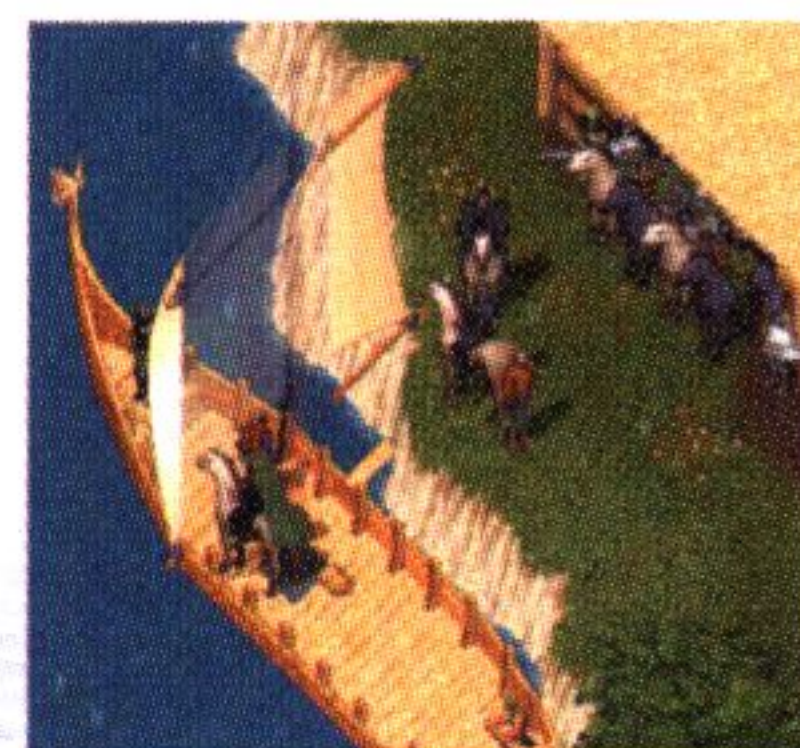
The US launch of *Kali*, allowing LAN games such as *Warcraft* and *Doom* to be played more easily over the Internet. Top modem speed reaches 14.4Kbps.

1996



Quake released. Top modem speed reaches 28.8Kbps. Global Internet usage tops 50 million.

1997



EA launches *Ultima Online*. Within three months it has 50,000 players. Blizzard releases *Diablo*. Within three months Battle.net has around 80,000 players. Top modem speed reaches 56Kbps.

"There'll always be people who say they'll never pay to play online"

GERAINT BUNGAY
HEAD OF GAMES STRATEGY, BT

ONLINE WHORES

SELL YOUR BODY TO PAY YOUR WAY

Online gaming is expensive, but there ways to recoup the cost. You could of course become a professional gamer and move to Korea or Texas. Or you could spend your life playing *EverQuest*, build up a character and then auction it off to the highest bidder. Player characters have changed hands in the past for thousands of dollars, which won't get you a villa in Majorca but is enough to help you break even.

Unfortunately, after the gold rush of the last couple of years publishers have started clamping down on this mercenary practice, although most have stayed clear of an outright ban. It's a practice sure to continue, after all, if people are willing to sell their real bodies, why not sell their virtual ones?



"You could do with some armor. Have mine for a grand."

after began the downward spiral of lay-offs and budget reductions – a cycle we never escaped." Accusing EA of losing around US\$250 million in failed online ventures, EA's Jeff Brown responds angrily.

"We have no idea how Richard would come up with something like that," he says, "but it's not true. Richard's history suggests he's a lot better at creating medieval fantasy than he is at math."

An *Ultima Online* sequel canned, Garriot parted with EA in late 2000 to return a year later with a mission to bring the Asian online RPG *Lineage: The Blood Quest* to the West. The most popular online RPG it may still be, but, despite its unrivalled success in its native South Korea, *Lineage* has had little impact on the outside world.

DOOM'S DARK REVENGE

Despite its role-playing origins, online gaming has spread its seed far and wide, across into other genres and even creating a few of its own. Unsurprisingly it is the antithesis of the persistent RPG realm that is just as well populated by



"*Lineage: The Blood Quest* – big in the East but not in the West.



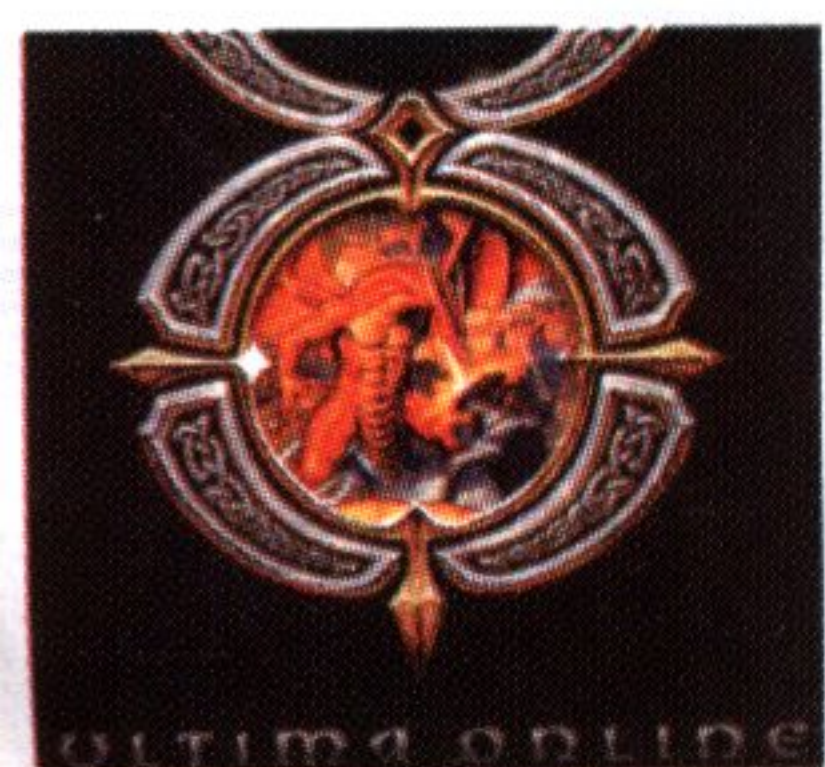
Dark Age Of Camelot is the latest online RPG.

rabid gamers, those that prefer the visceral thrill of the hunt in titles like *Half-Life* and *Unreal Tournament*. The debt here is owed almost exclusively to id Software's *Doom*, a game that defined first-person action when it first burst onto the PC back in 1993, offering the chance for players to connect across offices and colleges, one-on-one in quick 'death-matches' in the hunt for 'frags'. Far from the complications of having to fashion friendships or laboriously develop an online alter-ego, *Doom* and its descendants have arguably had a greater impact on gamers and certainly gaming than MUD or MMORPGs, not only by the nature of the gameplay, but more recently with third-party add-ons – almost all of which cater towards multiplayer gamers.

But it was with the launch of *Quake* in 1997 that the scene was set for an explosion in multiplayer shoot 'em ups and the beginning of the PC's technical dominance over consoles, as predicted by

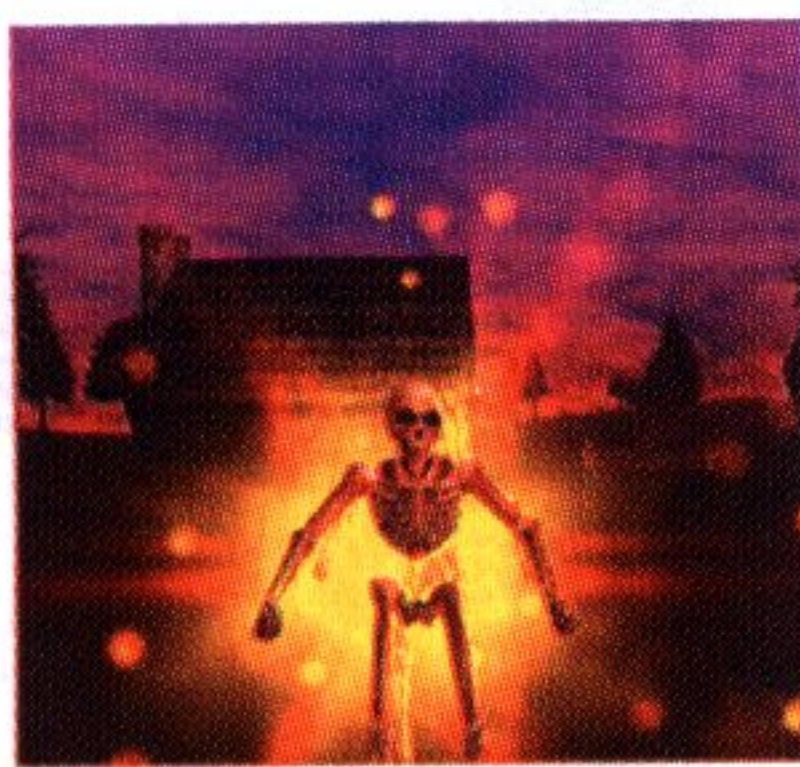
2005

1998



Sega Dreamcast launches in Japan, the first Internet-ready games console. Lord British slain by player killers in *Ultima Online*. Global Internet usage tops 150 million.

1999



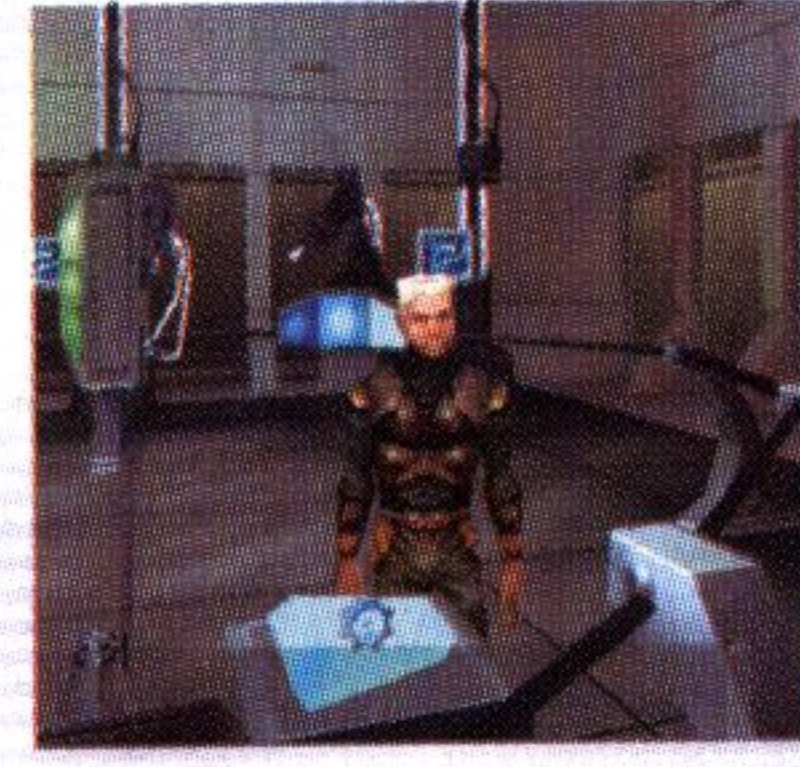
Verant launches *EverQuest*. Asheron's *Call* launches on Microsoft Gaming Zone. *Unreal Tournament* launches. Global Internet usage tops 300 million.

2000



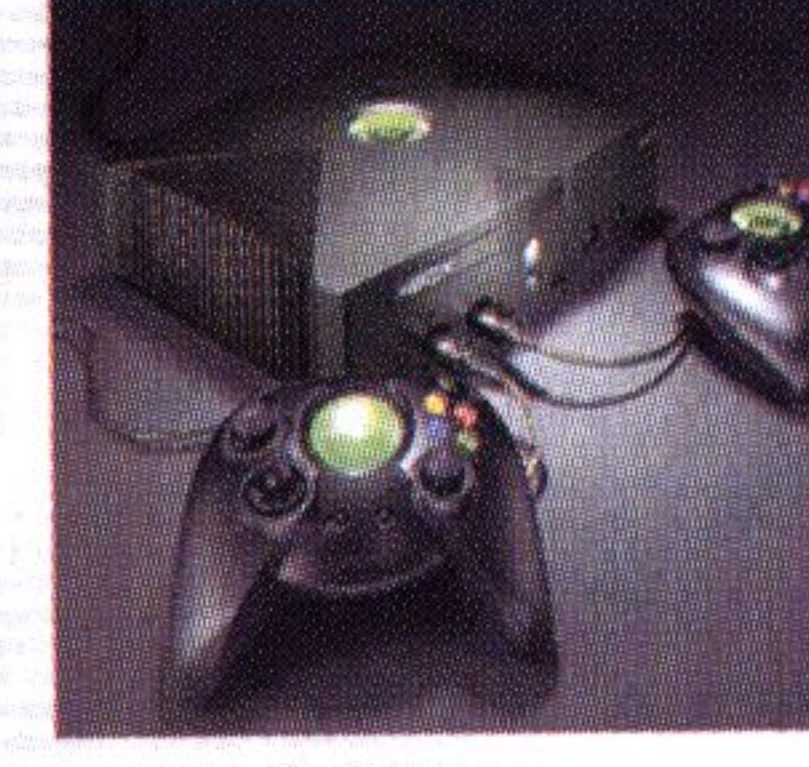
Quake III Arena launches. ADSL is launched in the UK, offering modem speeds of up to 2,000Kbps.

2001

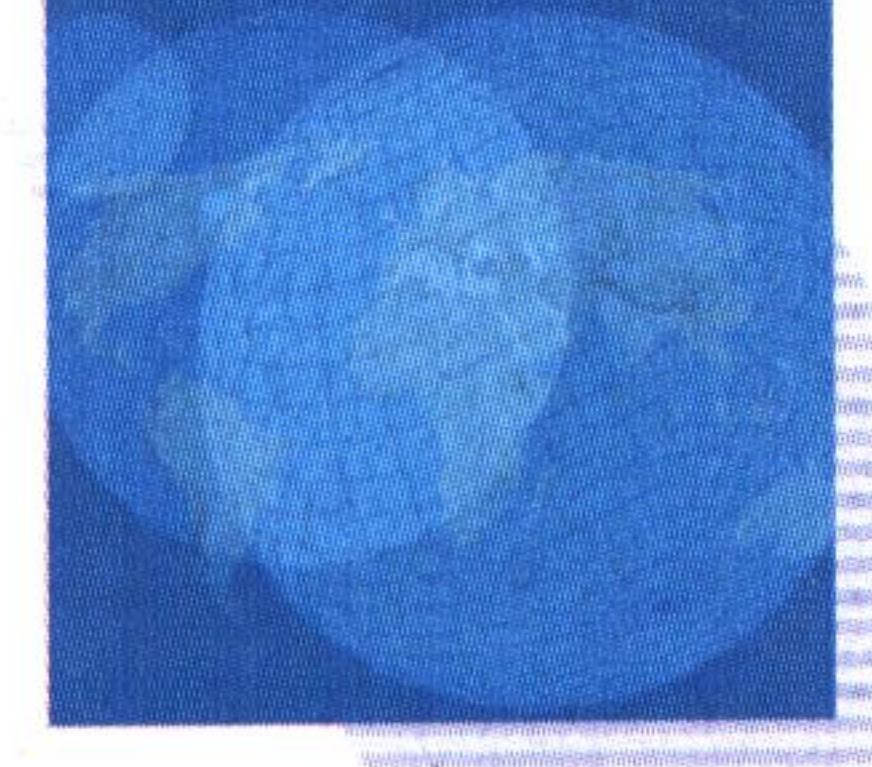


Lineage: The Blood Pledge becomes the most popular online game ever. *World War II Online* launches in a badly bugged state. Global Internet usage tops 550 million.

2002



EA cancels *Majestic*, the most expensive online failure so far. Microsoft launches Xbox, the first console with built-in hard disc and Ethernet adaptor.



Global Internet usage expected to reach 1 billion.



Doom paved the way for a new breed of online gamer.

the formation of the CPL – a professional gaming league with major sponsorship and US\$100,000 cash prizes. Professional gaming since has been a viable career path for a select few, most notably in South Korea and the US, where in South Korea especially, multiplayer clans and teams are held up as celebrities and regularly appear on primetime TV.

Though it was a phenomenon started by *Doom*, again it was *Quake* that exploded another side to PC gaming's

massive 83 per cent of them will be playing *Counter-Strike* and a further 15 per cent playing other mods. By way of comparison, the total number of players playing *Quake III*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Medal Of Honor*, *Wolfenstein* or *Jedi Knight II* at any one moment rarely numbers more than 20,000.

THE AGE OF MYTHOLOGY

By the late '90s, online gaming was riding the same wave of optimism responsible

While this has so far failed to happen, the money has kept pouring in.

While Sega targeted the front room (where Sony, and Microsoft with their Xbox, still have their sights set), the PC still remains the epicentre of innovation. Arguably the most ambitious online idea since the original MUD was EA's *Majestic*. Taking a lead from the Michael Douglas movie *The Game*, *Majestic* was designed to be a truly multimedia experience, beginning with online registration but swiftly moving to anonymous phone calls, text messages or even faxes. Launched last year with the grandiose claim of being the "first great Internet game", it will close its doors forever on April 30 without receiving a UK launch and EA blaming everything from September 11 to malicious hackers for the millions it lost on its ambitious venture.

Other sectors of the market were also feeling the strain as the new millennium dawned. Game servers operated by Barrysworld and Gameplay both ran into financial trouble and even the buoyant LAN- market is feeling the pinch after the collapse of The Playing Fields this year.

Also, the games that were being hyped as the next big thing were falling way

short. One of the highest-profile examples was *World War II Online*. The idea was to recreate the entire European theatre of WWII online and let players work their way through the ranks and 'relive the period'. Unfortunately, last summer Cornered Rat attempted to launch it prematurely, and it blew apart in the face of numerous bugs. The developers ploughed on regardless, although no-one was charged for the 'public test' period, and the game limped along in the face of 70MB patches and permanently congested servers. It's still going today, but it proves that maintaining persistent and reliable online games is a more expensive business than many publishers had originally assumed.

TO BE THIS GOOD TAKES AGES

With virtually every single-player game now including a multiplayer component and a new generation of online RPGs emerging, not to mention new genres opening up to the possibilities of player-populated persistent gameworlds, the future of online games looks secure but remains clouded by the familiar fog of war. One powerful factor yet to be reckoned with is the possibility of console owners finally joining the online revolution. Another is the near-fanatical loyalty of Far Eastern gamers: more than two million South Koreans play *Diablo*; three million play *Lineage* – figures that no one country in the West can even dream about. Imagine the possibilities of a pan-world RPG with players from across the globe, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Hope here may rest with the cross-culture appeal of *Final Fantasy XI* or the massive popularity of *Star Wars Galaxies*, but it could be many years until online gaming fulfills its real potential.

Certainly the best hope lies with those patrons with deep enough pockets to both plan for the future and afford it. Sony's commitment to online gaming with its www.station.com portal already supports a broad range of more than 20 titles, aimed at both hardcore and casual players. Scott McDaniel, vice president of marketing at Sony is bullish about the future. "The genres served by massively multiplayer online games are very limited right now. Basically there are a couple of RPGs, and a couple of experimental type games. However, in the years ahead we feel that every major gaming genre should, and will, be brought online. From simulations and shooters, to RTS games – the online universe offers untold gameplay options and creativity."

EA, meanwhile, is gearing up for the launch of *Sims Online* which, if it proves to be successful, could well be a breakthrough online pursuit with genuinely mainstream appeal.

However, someone is going to have to pay for all this innovation, and BT's recent acquisition of Games Domain suggests the big boys are already considering

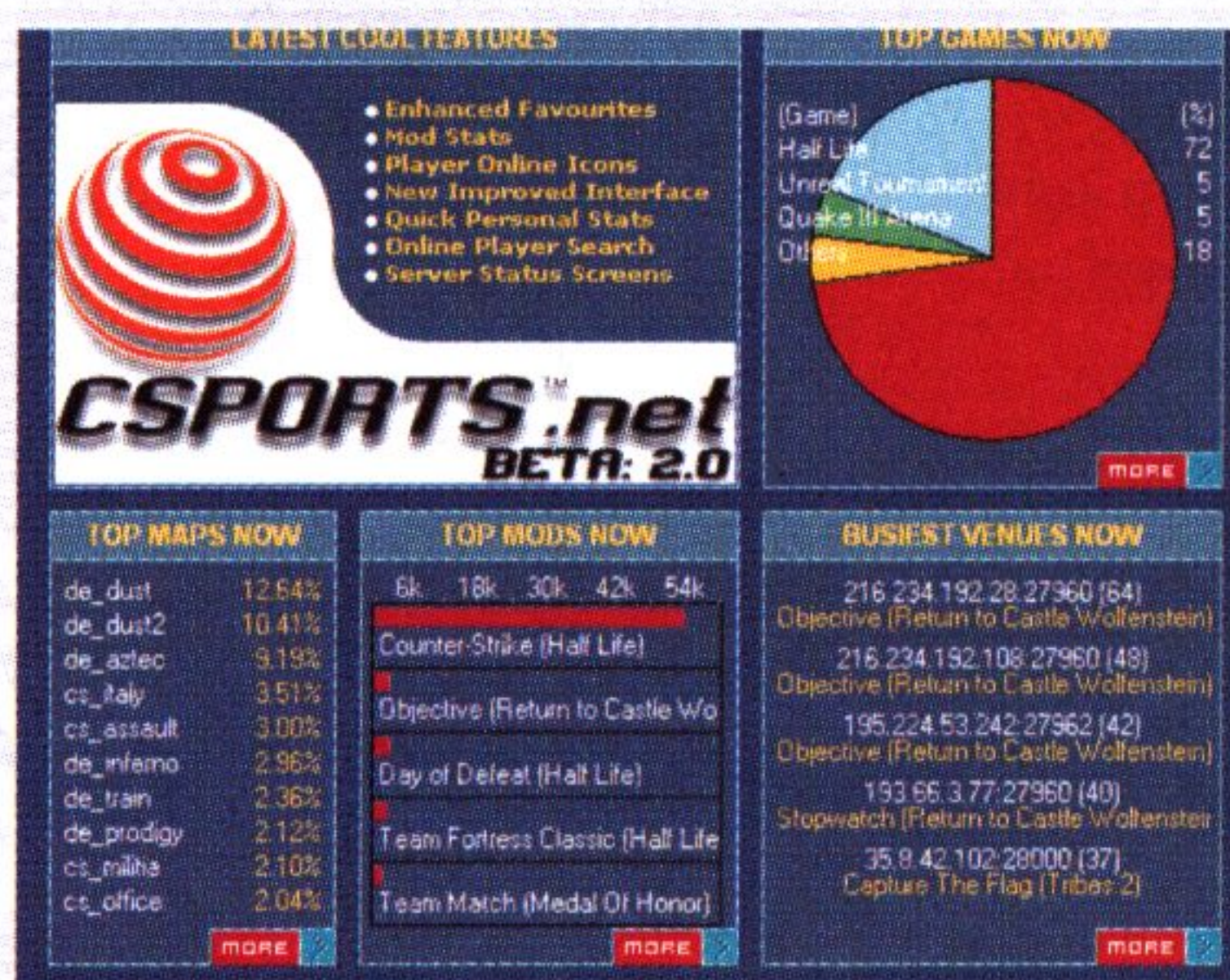
"We feel that every major gaming genre should, and will, be brought online"

SCOTT MCDANIEL
VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING, SONY

innate innovation, that of the the mod scene, where teams of amateur developers would congregate online to create original add-ons, maps, and player skins, all devoted almost exclusively to multiplayer gaming and released for free. The first big mod to have an impact was *Team Fortress*, an add-on that changed the nature of *Quake*'s deathmatch game so drastically and so successfully that the team behind it were later to be employed by *Half-Life*'s creators Valve Software. But by far the most popular mod to date is *Counter-Strike*, a real-world team-based simulation of terrorist vs special forces combat. Created for *Half-Life*, not only has CS found itself imitated by countless other mods, but its creators are also in the paid employ of Valve. The game has since been released commercially and is soon to spawn a full single-player commercial sequel. It's also worthy of note that of the 70,000 people playing *Half-Life* at any one time, a

for keeping afloat a thousand lame dotcoms. Although *EverQuest* and *Ultima* were far from cash cows, everyone assumed they would be in time and every publisher wanted a share of the action. So blinkered was this thinking that even the mighty Sega staked its entire corporate future on one big idea – a games console with Internet access. Sadly Dreamcast players were denied *Quake* for too long, whereas PC players were not enamoured with the idea of *Chu Chu Rocket!*. The two camps remained distinctly polarised and the Dreamcast was discontinued in early 2001.

Fortunately, there seemed to be a new boom market. The mobile phone was big news and with the advent of WAP, developers were counting on games becoming a killer application for the new medium. *The Nokia Game* was launched last year and backed with enigmatic TV advertising, one of a string of high-profile ideas designed to kick-start WAP gaming.



The figures don't lie.

Mods like *Team Fortress* and *Counter-Strike* are more popular than the games they're made for.



charging big bucks, as BT's head of games strategy, Geraint Bungay, explains: "We accept that this will be a gradual process and that there will be some resistance from people who say they'll never pay to play online..." he warns. "That's OK. There will always be a minority who never will pay or will attempt to run their own servers, but for the vast majority looking for hassle-free, fast, professionally run online games services, the certain, inescapable fact is that they will have to pay. I forecast that any online games service that does not charge its gamers to play will be out of business within 12 months or they will be offering an inferior service as they cannot afford to maintain a certain level of quality that running online games demands."

Of course it is up to developers to create the quality, the publishers to support it. However, not everyone is convinced by this brave new world. It could be argued that the dominance of off-the-peg engines results in games whose mechanics are remarkably similar and increasingly constrained by the factory-farming methods that now dominate movie production.

One of the original multiplayer pioneers, Richard Bartle, believes we still have a long way to go. "There's a lot of inertia, there's a lot of repetition of mistakes, there are many design decisions made for all the wrong reasons, and there is little originality," he says. "Things will get better, but for the next few years we'll have to endure the legacy of games based on flawed designs that are



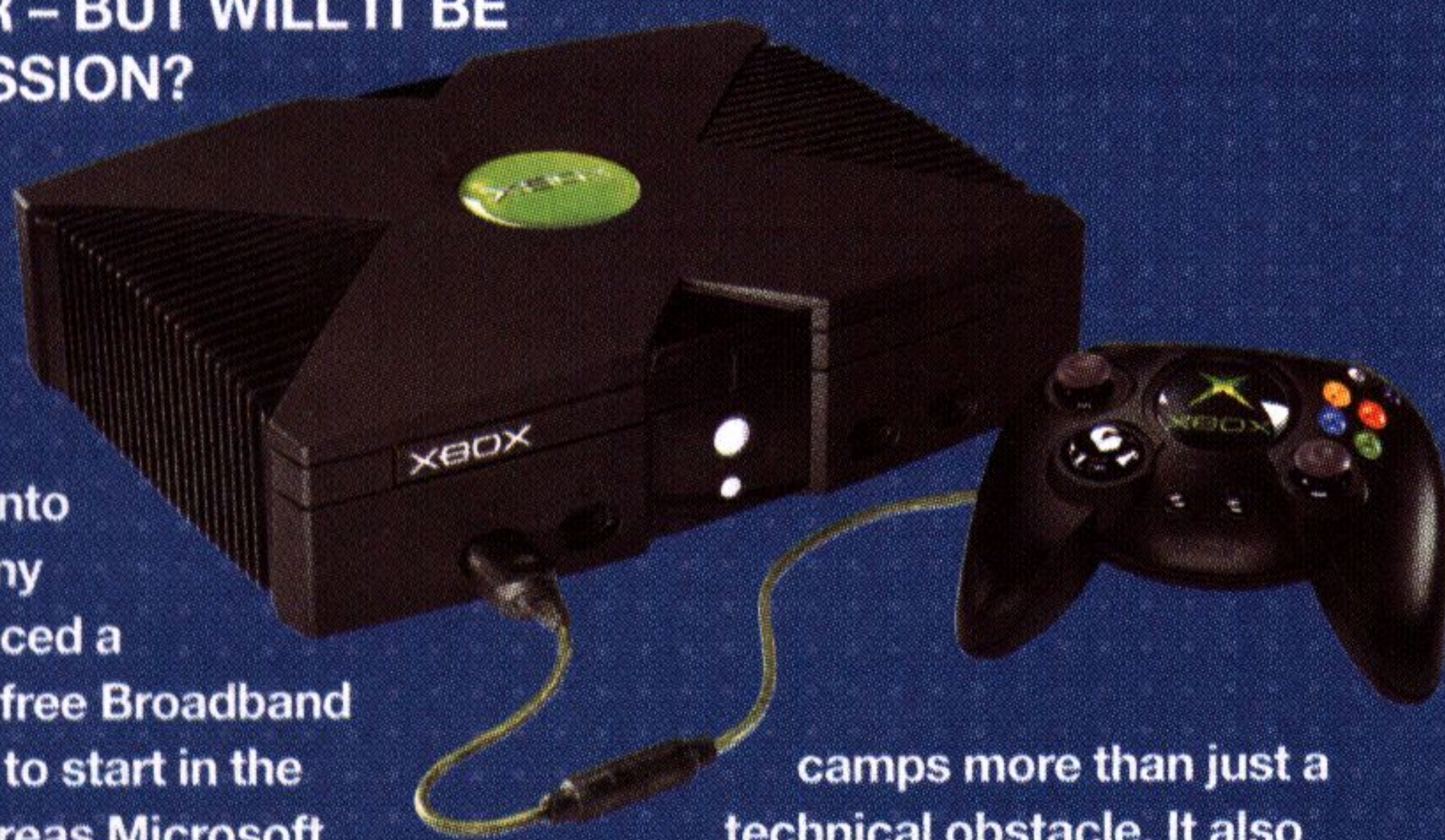
Majestic: when good ideas go bad.

CONSOLE YOURSELF

BRINGING CONSOLE OWNERS ONLINE IS THE FINAL FRONTIER – BUT WILL IT BE A FIVE-YEAR MISSION?

After the abject failure of the Sega Dreamcast, console manufacturers are not exactly rushing into the online arena. Sony has recently announced a comprehensive and free Broadband service for PS2, due to start in the US this August, whereas Microsoft will be using Xbox's built-in 100Mbps Ethernet adaptor to provide a subscription-based service around the same time.

However, everyone knows this will be a pretty tough nut to crack. Finding the price point that casual gamers are willing to pay will be tricky, as will the technical feasibility of allowing different hardware to co-exist and compete on the same servers. But there are even deeper obstacles to overcome. In practice, the combination of keyboard and mouse has always triumphed over gamepad alone, making competitive play between the two



campers more than just a technical obstacle. It also remains to be seen whether the more casual gamers the consoles seem to attract will revel in *Quake* and *EverQuest* or demand a whole new genre less dependent on high scores and levelling up.

Another problem is that the whole area of modding and mapping is simply not open to the console user. The PC arena is bolstered by the very fact that fans can make their own stuff and sustain ageing titles. Consider this: would the name of *Half-Life* be whispered in such reverential tones if the likes of *Counter-Strike* hadn't taken over the online world?

perceived as being successful because they make a ton of money"

We've come a long way in 30 years and yet, in many ways, very little has changed. For sure, with 100 million gamers expected online by 2005, the future will be busier than ever and just as bright as the past. Just don't expect it to be cheap... **PW**



Star Wars Galaxies: A new hope?



PC CD-ROM

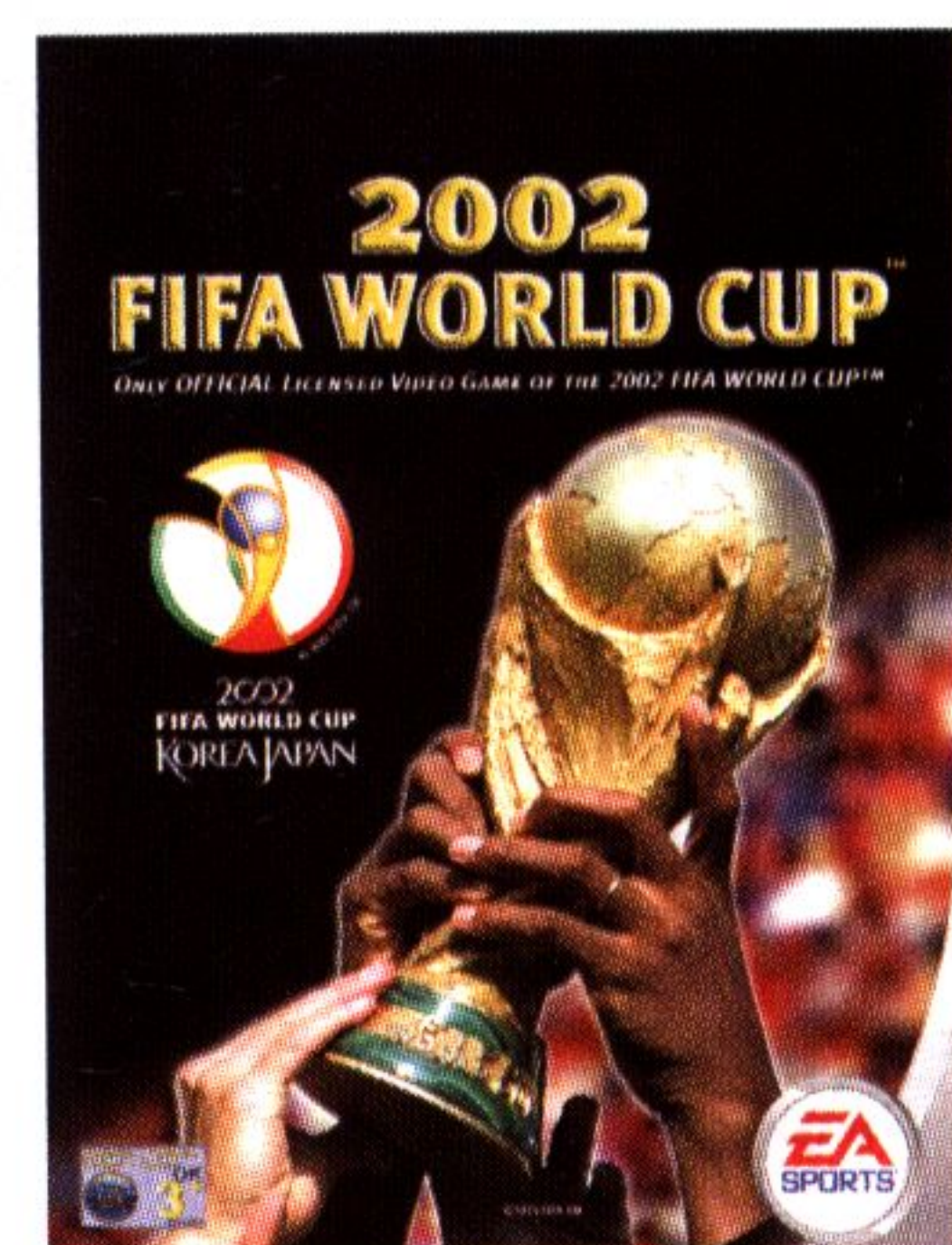


PlayStation 2

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it's in the game



It's antisocial

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

Mark Hill takes a drive through Liberty City and discovers that this isn't some cheap console cast-off

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Rockstar Games

PUBLISHER Take 2

WEBSITE www.grandtheftauto.com

OUT End of May/June

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Unparalleled levels of freedom
- Immensely playable, addictive, violent and funny
- It was one of the best games of last year on any platform
- Much more detailed, crisper graphics than the PS2 version

AT FIRST WE didn't really care. The original *Grand Theft Auto* was a fantastic piece of entertainment, redefining our priorities in terms of graphics versus gameplay. Its simple, two-dimensional style managed to bring an extraordinary depth and freedom of gameplay and we loved it to bits. But then the sequel appeared, swapping the realistic feel and settings of the original for a dark, futuristic city full of violent crime and sophisticated gang warfare and we just didn't care anymore. The beauty of *GTA* was that it recreated the real world, with functioning cities full of people going about their lives. So it was great to be

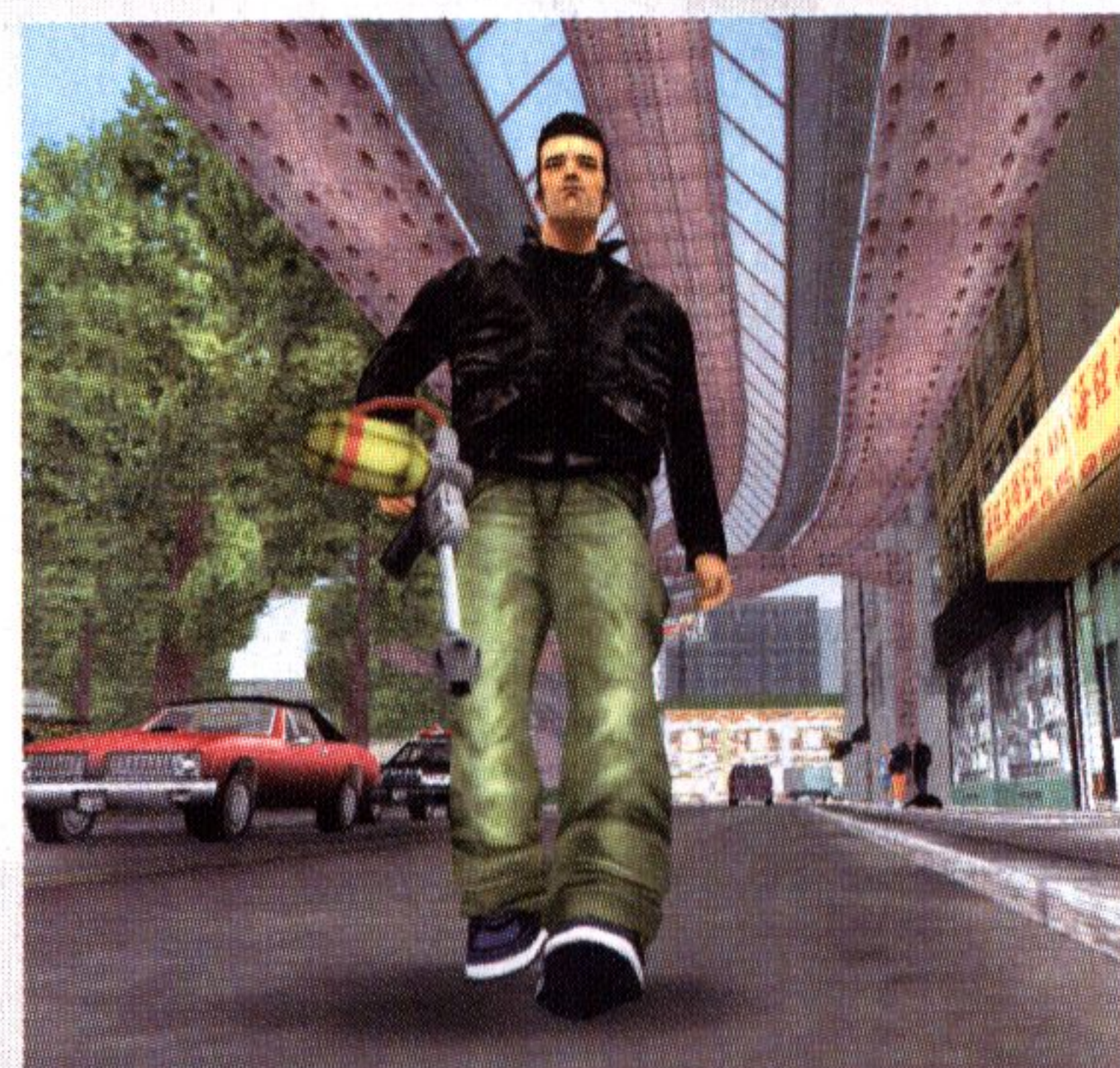
able to nick a truck, skip all the red lights if you felt like it, kill a bunch of people and get chased by the police for your crimes. In *GTA 2* there were no rules, so it wasn't fun to break them.

So when we found out that *Grand Theft Auto III* was going to be a PlayStation 2 game, we didn't really care all that much. So what if the series started on the PC. So what if it was going to be 3D. It was obviously going to lose all its charm and playability in doing so anyway. Wasn't it?

A PROPER PC GAME

Oh, how very wrong we were. I count it as one of the best games of this decade so

far. On any platform. Not since the days of *Elite* on the BBC have we enjoyed such freedom to roam and do what we damn well please without ever feeling lost, bored or wondering what to do next. Actually, you are always left wondering what to do next. Beat up a dirty copper, steal his car and go on a set of vigilante missions? Get to the top of a high building and start picking off pedestrians with your newfound sniper rifle? Contact your underworld boss and find out what he wants you to do next and where the story is going to go? Only *Deus Ex* offers the same amount of freedom in the way you complete each mission. And only *Deus Ex*



**"The beauty of
GTA was that it
recreated the
real world"**

It's not called Liberty City for nothing. You can do what you damn well please.

CV



ROCKSTAR STUDIOS

It was previously known as DMA – while Rockstar Games has always been the name of its publishing arm – and it created all three GTA titles.

1997 *Grand Theft Auto* is released to a wave of controversy among the tabloids and sheer joy among us gamers.

1999 They release the add-on pack for *GTA* called *London, 1969*, which is set in an *Austin Powers* type of London, and *GTA 2*, which disappointed because it wasn't set in the real world.

2001 *GTA III* wows console audiences everywhere and picks up a large number of Game Of The Year awards.

2002 The PC version of *GTA III* should be out by June at the latest.

has kept me so captivated by a believable, consistent gameworld.

So, the question that begs to be answered is, why have we waited so long to play it on the PC? I spoke to Jeff Castaneda and Jeronimo Barrera, two of the game's producers, while they were in London showing off the PC version, and asked them that very question.

"There's a huge PC *GTA* community out there," says Jeff. "There are lots of forums and webring dedicated to downloads and news and stuff, so yeah, a lot of PC gamers were really annoyed with us for putting this one out on PS2 first."

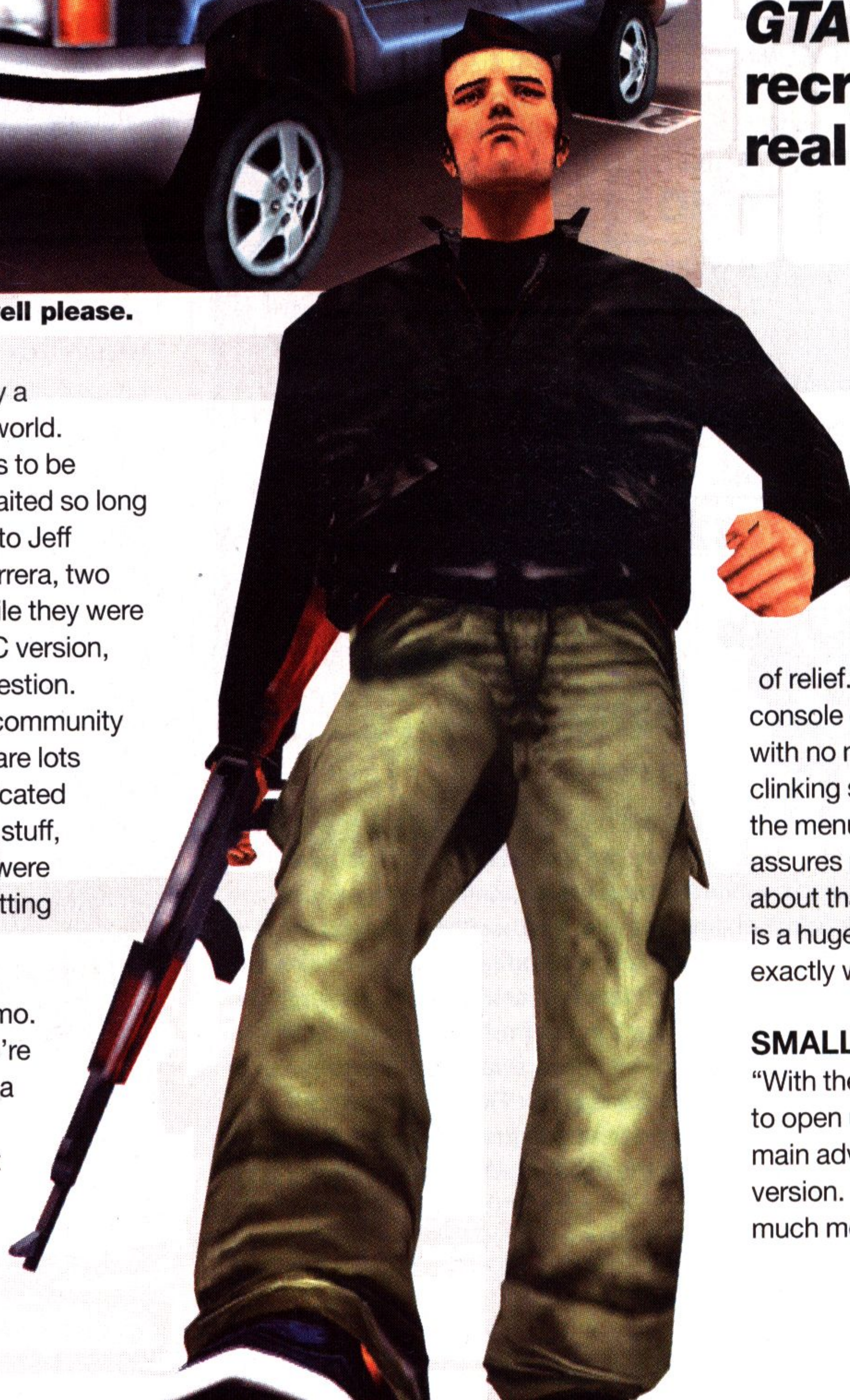
"But it wasn't a console-specific game," adds Jeronimo. "Besides what controller you're using, whether it's mouse or a joypad, it's not a case of a console game being brought on to the PC. This is just *Grand Theft Auto*, period.

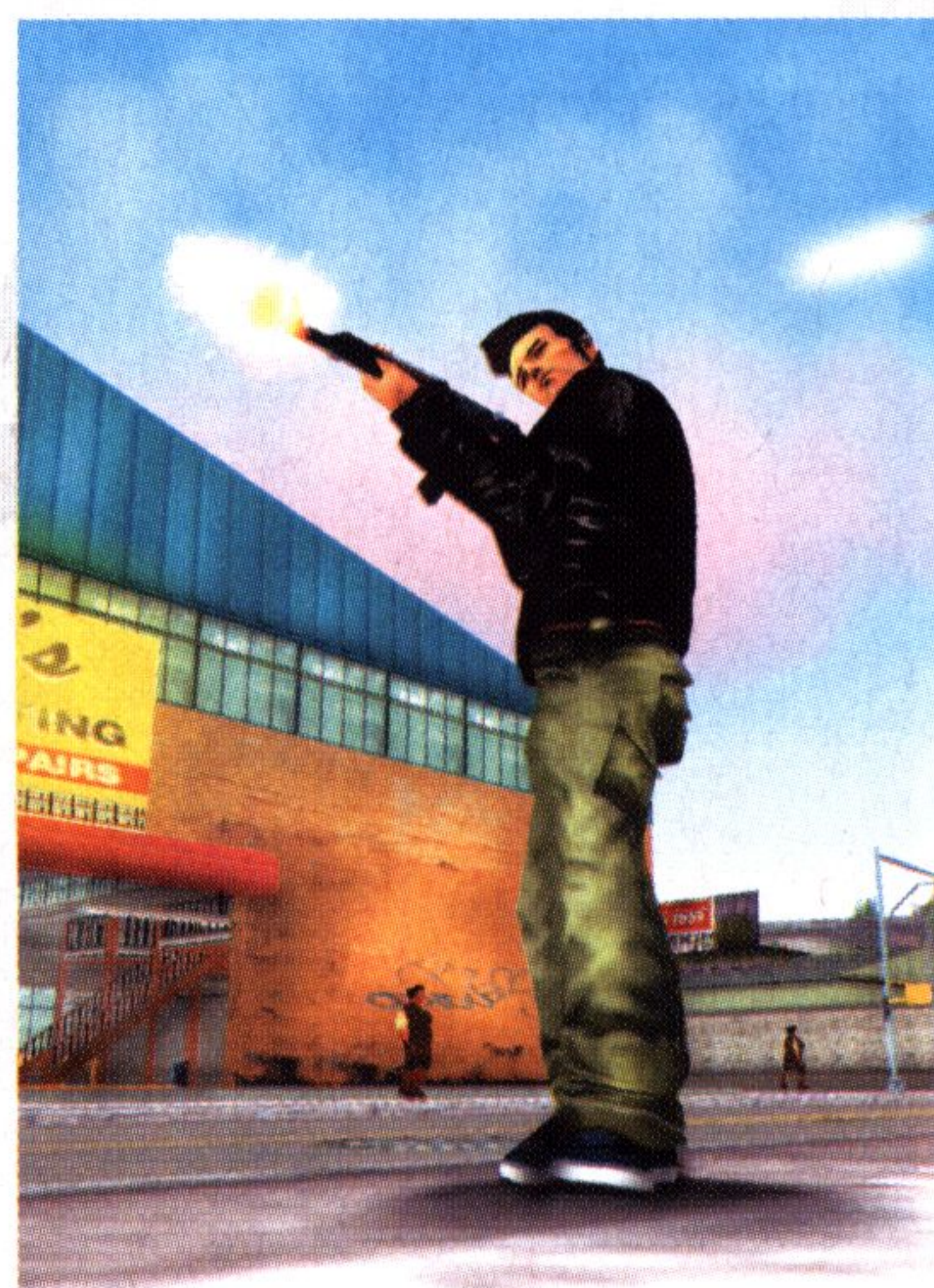
Here it is on the PC. And the benefits of this version are that it looks great. The textures are much better, you can mess about with the draw distance and change the resolution and all that stuff."

Here I breathed a giant sigh of relief. There's nothing worse than a console conversion stuck in 800x600, with no mouse support and annoying clinking sounds as you navigate through the menu with the keyboard. Jeronimo assures me there was never any fear about that. Everyone at Rockstar Games is a huge PC gamer and they know exactly what we want.

SMALL MOUSE, BIG WORLD

"With the mouse control the world seems to open up," says Jeronimo of one of the main advantages this has over the PS2 version. "You get to explore the cities in much more detail, because you can look





The more crimes you commit the more police come after you, even in helicopters and SWAT vans.

around easily and notice the street signs, say, without having to tweak your character around until he's facing the right way and the camera is in the right position." Jeff agrees. "PC gamers, because we're so used to the mouse, we automatically have the instinct to look around properly, which works really well

in this game. You can get a real sense of how big the city is, you can see the tops of buildings and think 'I can get up there and do some sniping'".

I can vouch for the frustration of running around on foot in the PS2 version and struggling to get a good grasp of the world and the objects around you. And

at no time is this more apparent than when you're trying to snipe or use the rocket launcher, or even non-first person weapons like the Uzi. After spending ages failing missions because it took me so long to line up my sniper scope with the heads of the mobsters I was supposed to be whacking, I couldn't wait to do it all again, whizzing the cursor around with the mouse skills honed by so many first-person shooters, and dispatching a load of drug-pushers in a matter of seconds, with a satisfying siphon of blood springing with almost balletic timing around them. I asked Jeronimo if they had ever considered letting you play the whole on-foot bits in first-person. "It was an option, but we didn't really consider it seriously. The whole point is that you're this third-person character, and it just lost the vibe of the game without it. Even though I know third-person games are not really a favourite among the PC crowd." Although, as I point out to him, *Max Payne* has already changed that. And *GTA III* works similarly to *Max Payne*, and the more recent third-person view in *Jedi Outcast*, with a crosshair on screen at all times when you're on foot.

ARE YOU NEW AROUND HERE?

So you can rest assured that this isn't just a PS2 port. It's a PC game that just happens to have been released on a console first. But what about the differences between the versions? Well, apart from looking much better and being much easier to control when

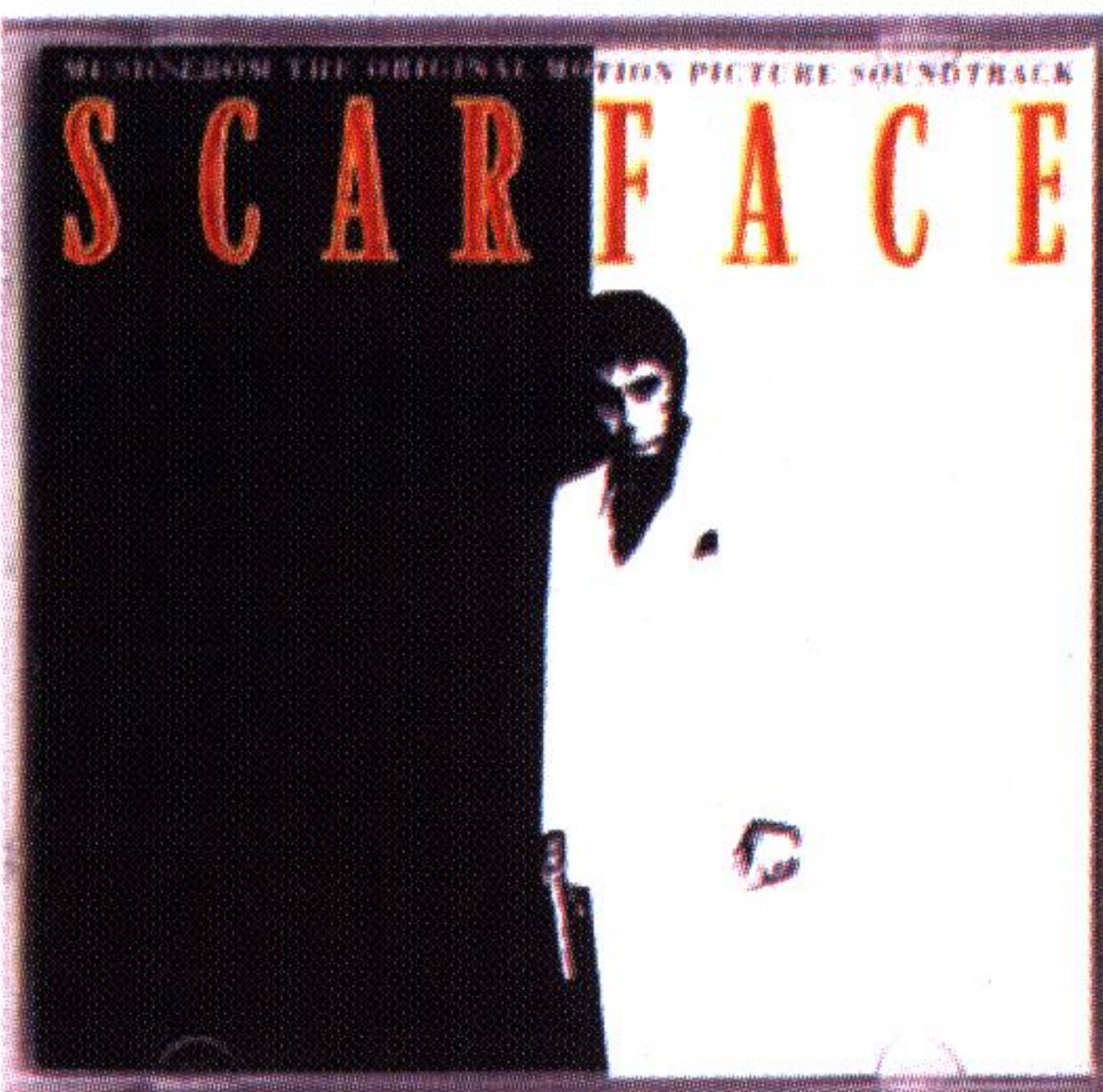
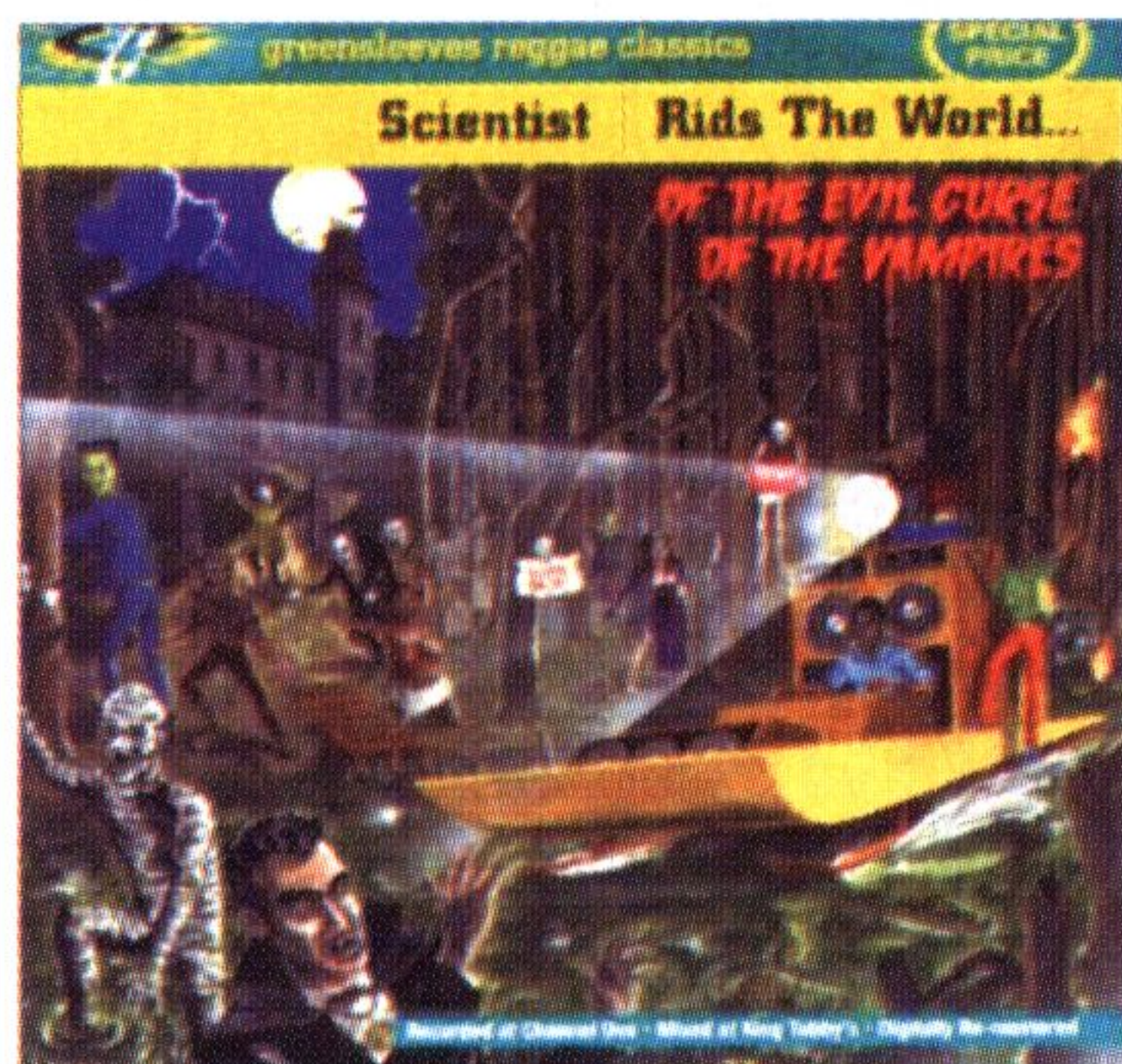
out of a car thanks to the mouse/keyboard combination, there are a few new features.

First of them is the fact that you can change the main character's skin, much in the same way you could in *Max Payne*. Expect to see plenty of skins making their rounds on the Net. You can even, if you're egomaniacal and weird enough, take a picture of yourself and use it as a skin, so you can watch yourself committing all sorts of unspeakable offences. What that will do to the 'it's only a game' argument we so like to use against the tabloid hysteria towards the violence, is something you can speculate on all by yourself next time you're sitting on the bog.

"There's also a new radio station," says Jeff, "where you can play your MP3s. So, if for any particular reason you don't like any of the music in the game," (and if you want to know how much there is, look no further than our Pumping On The Radio panel) "you can just listen to your own."

"And the third new feature is that you can save your replays. If you find something that's really cool to do, you can just hit a button to save it as a replay, send it to your friends or just post it online." And if you think that's just a worthless extra no one will ever use, it's clear you've never watched someone else play *GTA III*. As I sit here transcribing the tape of the interview/demonstration, I'm constantly having to fast-forward large sections where all you can hear is the

PUMPING ON THE RADIO



GET IN A CAR AND TWIDDLE THOSE KNOBS

As if driving recklessly, causing traffic pile-ups and being pursued relentlessly by the police wasn't enough to keep you occupied, there are ten radio stations to headbang along to. If you get in a gang-owned car it will probably have on the style of music they like most. So, get in a Mafia Sentinel, for example, and you'll be greeted by arias from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage Of Figaro* and from Verdi's *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto*. The Colombians on the other hand favour Flashback FM, featuring songs from the soundtrack to *Scarface*, while The Yardies prefer K-Jah's reggae tunes, with short bursts from the likes of Scientist. There's also some hip hop and rock, although the highlight for most will be Chatterbox FM, a hilarious talk show that might tempt you to park in a quiet sidestreet and just listen. And if you don't like any of that, there's the new station for the PC only where you can play all your own MP3s. Boogie on

sound of people screaming, cars crashing and radio channels being switched from one station to another. These are the bits where we all just kept quiet and watched someone play the game, enraptured by the chases, the stunts, the sheer aliveness of the city. Our silence broken only by the odd gasp, exclamation or laugh.

COOL FACTOR

It should be becoming clear to you by now just what an ambitious title *GTA III* is, and how little relation it bears to most games released these days. Or, in fact, ever.

"One thing we tried to do with *GTA* was to change the way computer games are perceived" says Jeff. "And we have a lot of evidence that the series has done that. *GTA III* is such a sophisticated gaming experience that it's giving the industry some respect." Most of us would agree that the general perception is still that videogames are just for kids, but, like Jeff says: "The production value in this game is amazing. You just need to take a look at the voice acting. This game is inspired by all the great mafia films of yesteryear, such as *The Godfather*, *Scarface* and *Goodfellas*. And we cast the actors as if it were a film, (for a closer look at the cast, see the boxout). These days it's really easy for a game to hire a big star, like Macy Gray in a snowboarding game or whatever. They'll pay them a lot of money but all they'll end up doing is yelling a bit in the background. It's just stupid. We hired people who'd do a proper acting job. They might not be the biggest stars, but they're just right for the part. It's all part of what makes the game such a hit with everybody. We even have people like Samuel L Jackson ringing up for free copies of the game." Because a Hollywood megastar doesn't have enough money to buy one himself, obviously. But it is interesting that his name should crop up, because in many ways *GTA* is the gaming equivalent of Samuel L Jackson. They're both violent, have an attitude and don't take themselves too seriously. Most crucially, they're both very cool. There's something hip and streetwise about them. You wouldn't go around wearing a *Half-Life*

T-shirt (well, not unless you're a fat nerd with no mates), but clothing with the *GTA* logo stamped on it seems perfectly acceptable.

GRAND THEFT ABSENCE

I spoke earlier about the freedom you have to do as you please, and Jeff Castaneda is quick to point out how important this is to the game.

"That's the beautiful thing about *GTA III*. Everybody can play it differently, to their own style. The missions don't have just one way of doing them. You have to be creative because it makes you think, and people can complete each mission in their own way." Add to that the fact that you can hijack taxis, ambulances, fire-engines and police cars and complete a whole set of optional missions in each one while earning some extra cash, and you can see what all the fuss is about. "So many games out there focus on just trying to do one thing well, but with *GTA III* you can't classify it or put it into a genre, there's so many things you can do."

"And there is so much detail too," chips in Jeronimo. "Even after you've played it for ages there's loads of things you will have missed." And that's not just empty talk. Even as I sat there watching someone play I kept pointing things out only to be told that they were already there in the PlayStation 2 version. But then I was probably having too much fun running pedestrians over to notice them.

For all its greatness though, there are a few things missing. Most glaringly for the PC community, the absence of multiplayer.

"We toyed around with the idea," says Jeronimo, "but if we were just to put in deathmatch modes and the usual stuff, it sorts of cheapens the whole experience. We'd want to design something that was specific to the *GTA* universe. So we're going to wait for now until we can do it properly. Anyway, *Max Payne* showed that a game doesn't need multiplayer if the single-player is strong enough."



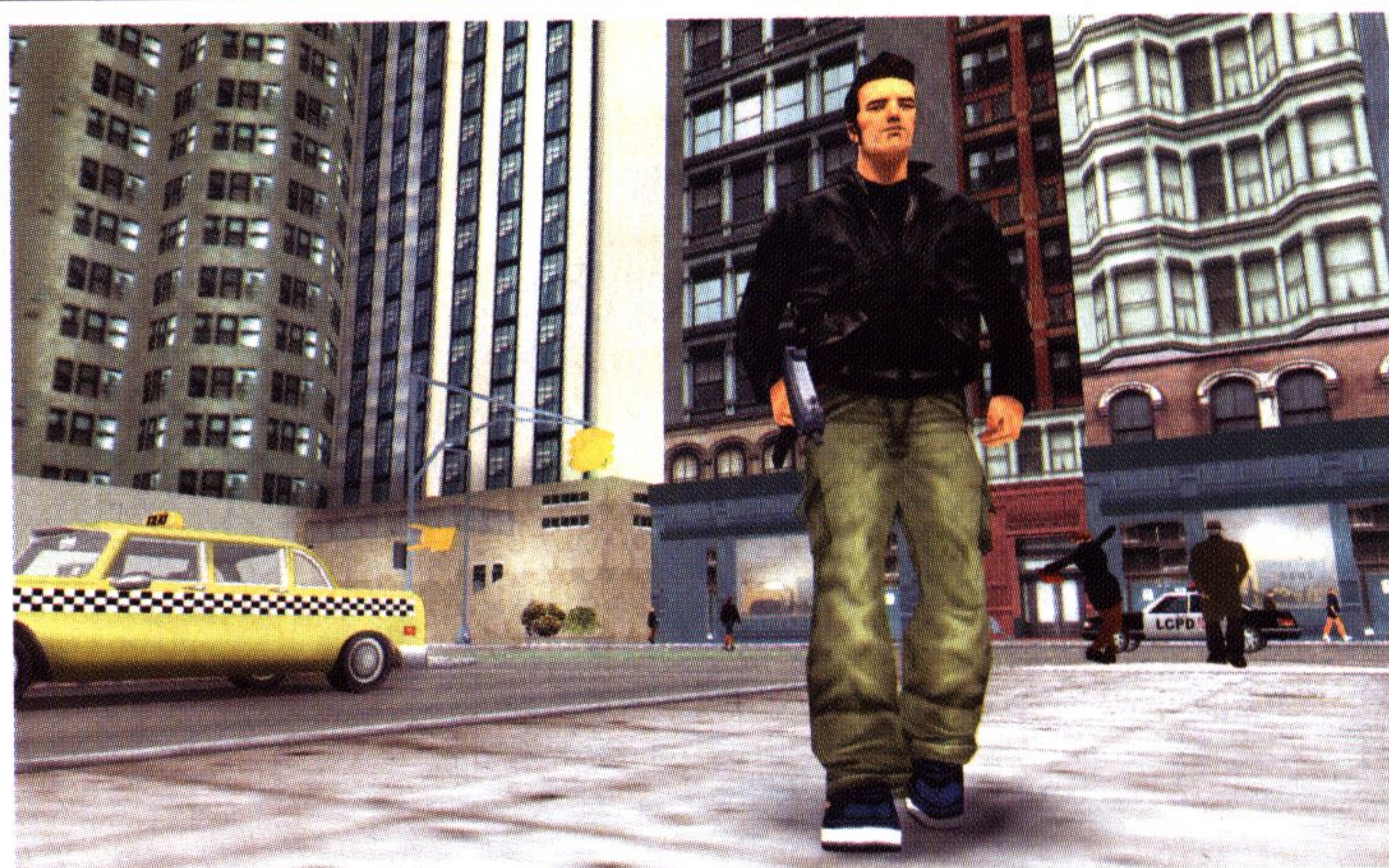
You could spend hours just cruising around, trying all the different cars.

"The single-player game is very sophisticated," adds Jeff. "And we'd want the multiplayer to be just as good, not just something people are gonna think is just an afterthought."

Which seems like a sensible idea. There's an obsession at the moment with multiplayer modes. You don't expect *EverQuest* to provide you with a great single-player experience, do you? So why should every single-player game have to have multiplayer? We'll wait for the day when Rockstar can create a proper online

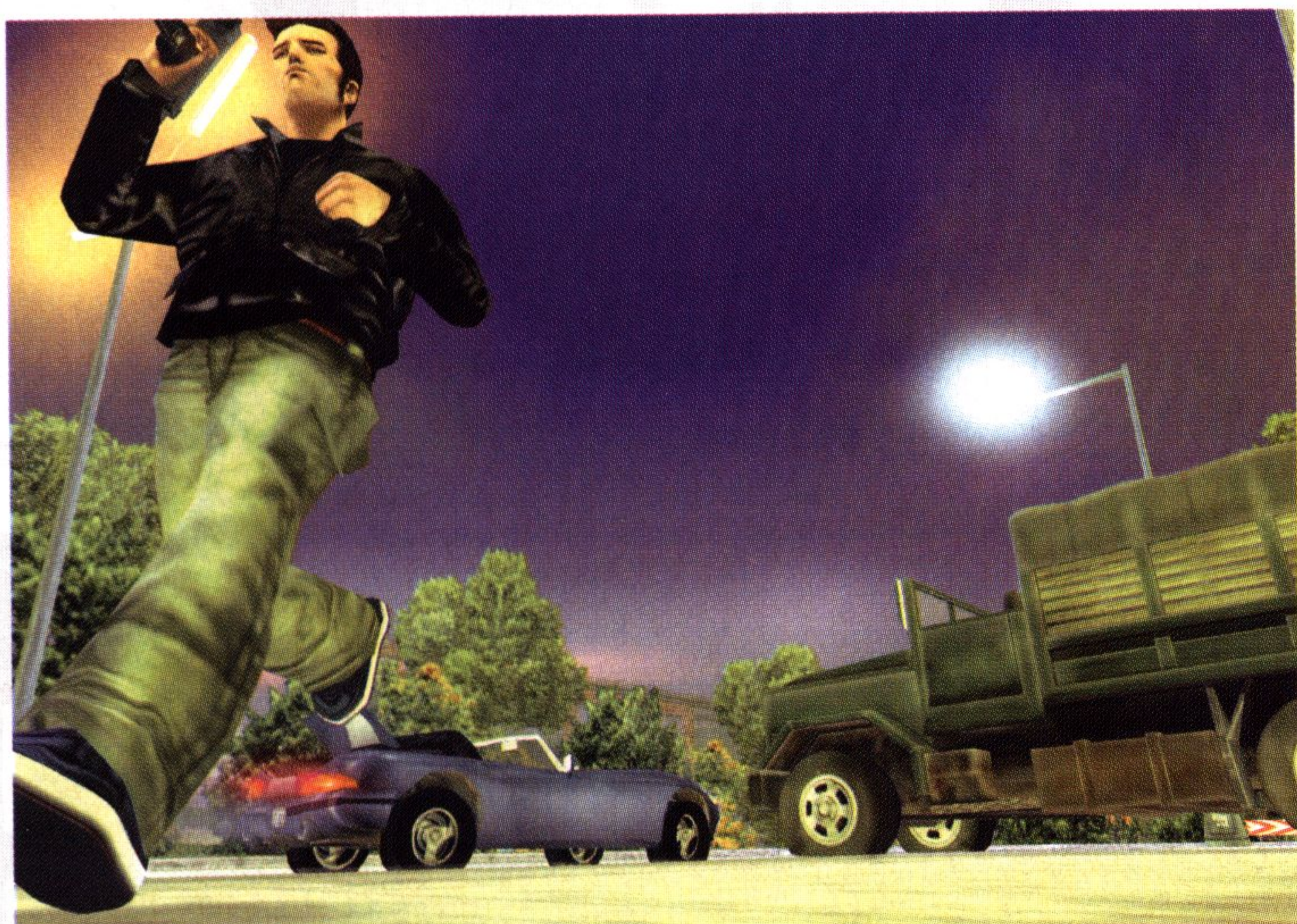
"Even after you've played it for ages there's loads of things that you will have missed"

MOVE TO THE CITY



FORGET MIDTOWN MADNESS' SAN FRANCISCO AND LONDON, THIS IS THE REAL THING

We've banged on enough about how much there is to do in Liberty City, but what you probably haven't grasped yet is the sheer enormity of the place. The city is divided into three areas, industrial, business and suburban and each one is big enough that you'd easily get lost were it not for the handy pull-out map that comes with the manual and the radar at the bottom of your screen. Each area has its own hospital, police station, fire station, weapon shop, hideout and selection of low-lives. It would take you hours to walk from one place to another, so it's just as well you can drive everywhere, across bridges and through underground tunnels, you can also use trains, subways and boats. There's even an airport, a sports stadium, a shopping mall and water dam with its own picnic area. That big enough for ya?



New character graphics, hi-res, mouse control – not bad.

experience, with a persistent world and gangs of real people you can lead.

You might also notice that there are no motorbikes, but as Jeronimo says: "A lot of time went into designing this and this time we just couldn't do motorcycles. Hell, you've got boats and planes, what more do you f***ing want?"

PURE CARTOON FUN

Remember the media explosion, thoroughly encouraged by the publishers

of course, that dominated the tabloid press and even television debates when the first *Grand Theft Auto* appeared? You could steal cars. You could run over policemen. You could drive on the wrong side of the road. And that was all in a 2D top-down perspective, bearing little physical resemblance to reality. So what would happen when the same thing was released in full 3D, with realistic car physics, bad language and the freedom to perform some serious antisocial conduct?

How about beating a dear old granny to the floor, then kicking her in the stomach until she dies? How about finding a tall building, climbing to the top and blowing people's heads off with a sniper rifle? How about running over a bunch of tramps, waiting for the ambulance to arrive, shooting the medics and then stealing the ambulance to continue your bloody spree elsewhere? Well, guess what? No-one raised an eyebrow. Maybe it was because you couldn't fly an aeroplane into an office tower, but the gutter press just wasn't interested.

"There's a lot of moral choices to make in the game," says Jeronimo. "You can play it like a complete ass, but if you play it straight it's no more violent than any movie out there rated 18. And *GTA III* is an 18-certificate game. It's not that terrible. There's a lot of freedom, and what's terrible is the people who go around beating up old ladies." Somehow we think Jeronimo has done his fair share of granny-whacking. And we think you will too. Because, despite the realism, *GTA III* is still pure cartoon fun.

I said earlier that *GTA III* was one my favourite games of this decade on

"GTA is the gaming equivalent of Samuel L Jackson. They're both violent, have attitude and don't take themselves too seriously"

any platform. But for the moment we can only speculate about how it will translate to the PC. I may have seen some early code and even had a go for a few minutes, but it won't be until I've spent a week playing it myself that I'll know if it all really comes together properly. I've already nearly completed it on the PS2 but, the funny thing is, I can't wait to do it all over again. Read our exclusive review next month to find out how it goes. **PC**



"Nice car, I'll take it."

I KNOW THAT VOICE

AND SO YOU SHOULD. HERE IS SOME OF THE GREAT TALENT *GTA III* HAS ASSEMBLED FOR ITS CAST



Joe Pantoliano. Best known to everyone as a traitor in *The Matrix* and a real son of a bitch in *The Sopranos*, he seems to have taken over from another Joe, Pesci that is, as the new foul-mouthed shorty with a bad temper. Here he plays the foul-mouthed Luigi Goterelli, owner of a classy whorehouse.



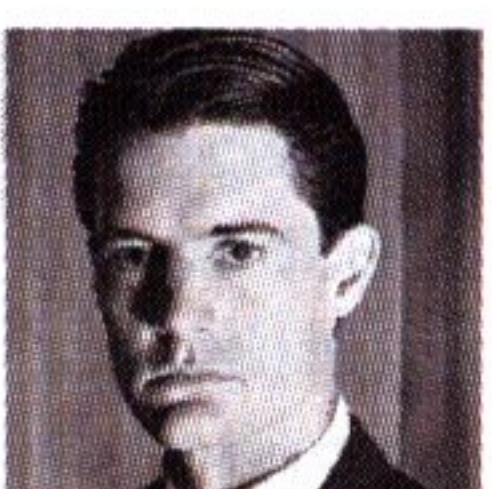
Michael Madsen. He makes a living by appearing mostly in trash, but will be forever remembered as the sadistic Mr Blonde in *Reservoir Dogs*, mutilating coppers off camera to the sounds of *Stuck In the Middle With You*. He's now working on Tarantino's next film, *Kill Bill*. Here he's the heir to Liberty City's mafia empire and owns a restaurant run by his overpowering mother.



Michael Rapaport. Built like a brickhouse and sporting an incredibly whiny voice, Rapaport always plays dumb characters (see Woody Allen's *Mighty Aphrodite* or *Copland*), even if they are physics experts, as in *Deep Blue Sea*. In *GTA III* he's the mafioso mechanic Joey Leone.



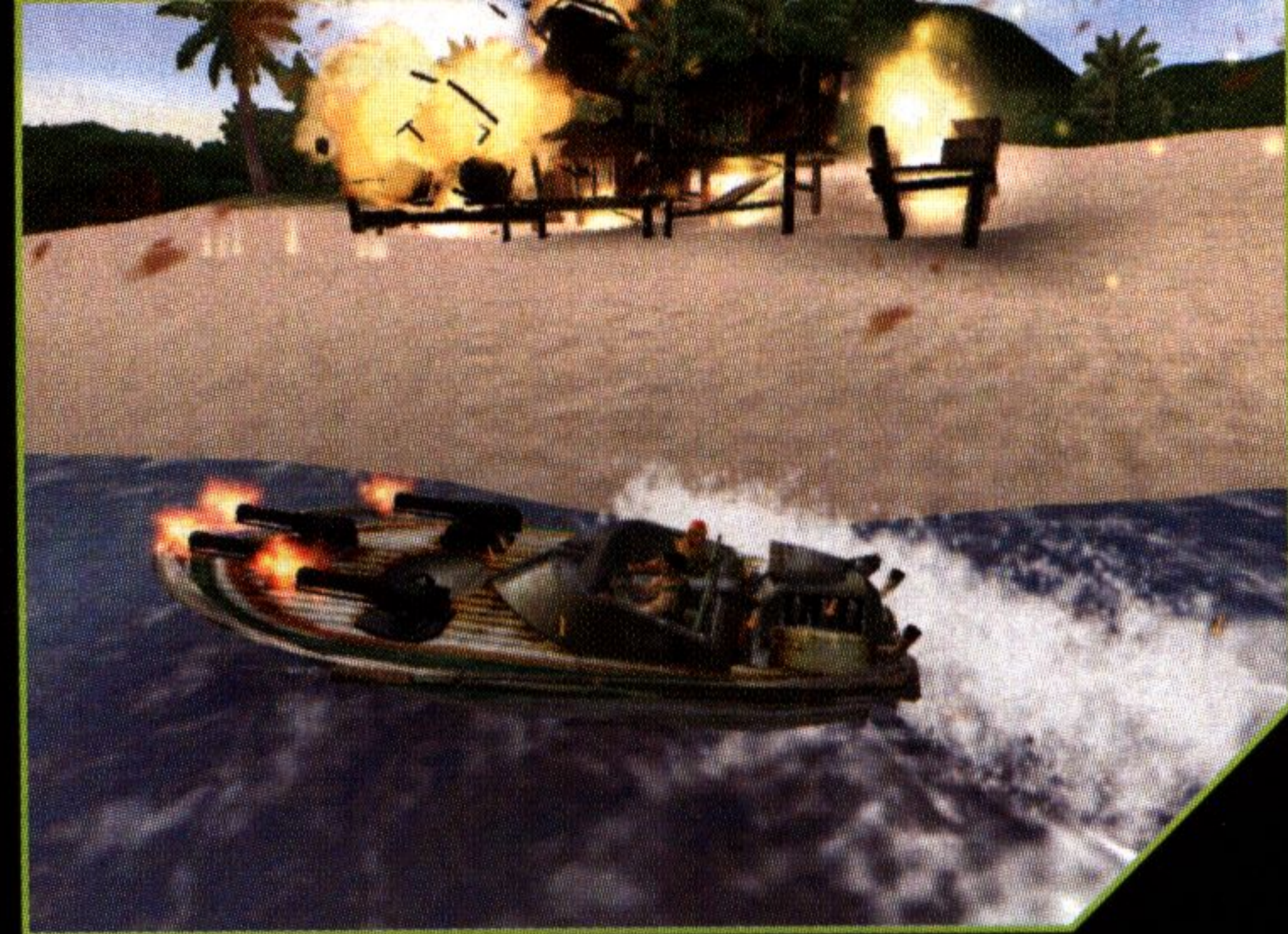
Robert Loggia. One of the most recognisable voices in movies, even if you can't name most of them. Highlights include *Scarface* and Lynch's wonderfully incomprehensible *Lost Highway*. As in so many made-for-TV films, in *GTA III* he plays the mafia don, Salvatore Leone.



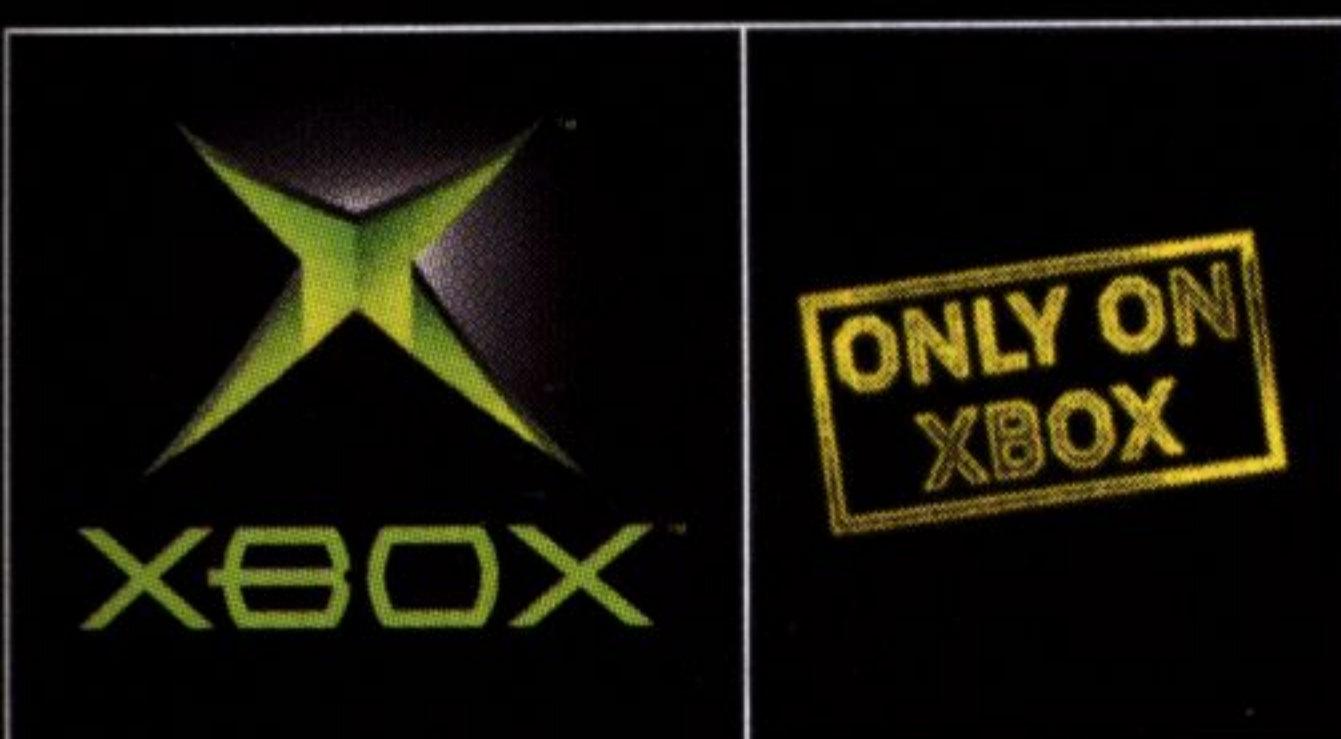
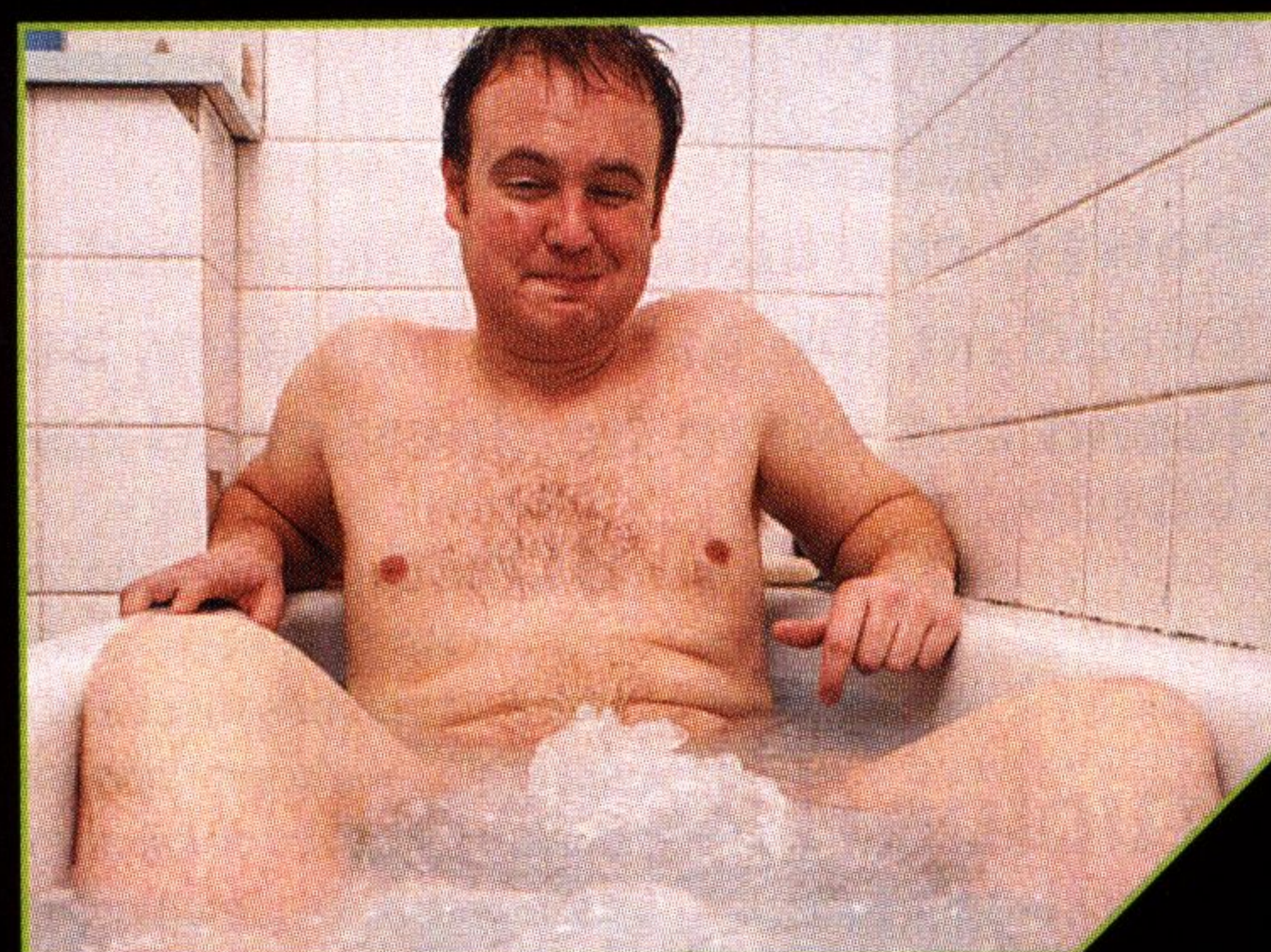
Kyle MacLachlan. A serious case of miscasting in *The Doors* tarnished a reputation which was buried forever by two serious stinkers, *The Flintstones* and *Showgirls*. But for me he'll always be the marvellous surreal sleuth Agent Dale Cooper, from *Twin Peaks*. His association with David Lynch stretches back to the magnificent *Blue Velvet* and the rather rubbish *Dune*. In *GTA III* he plays the rather suave media baron Donald Love.



The most un-PC PC game there is.



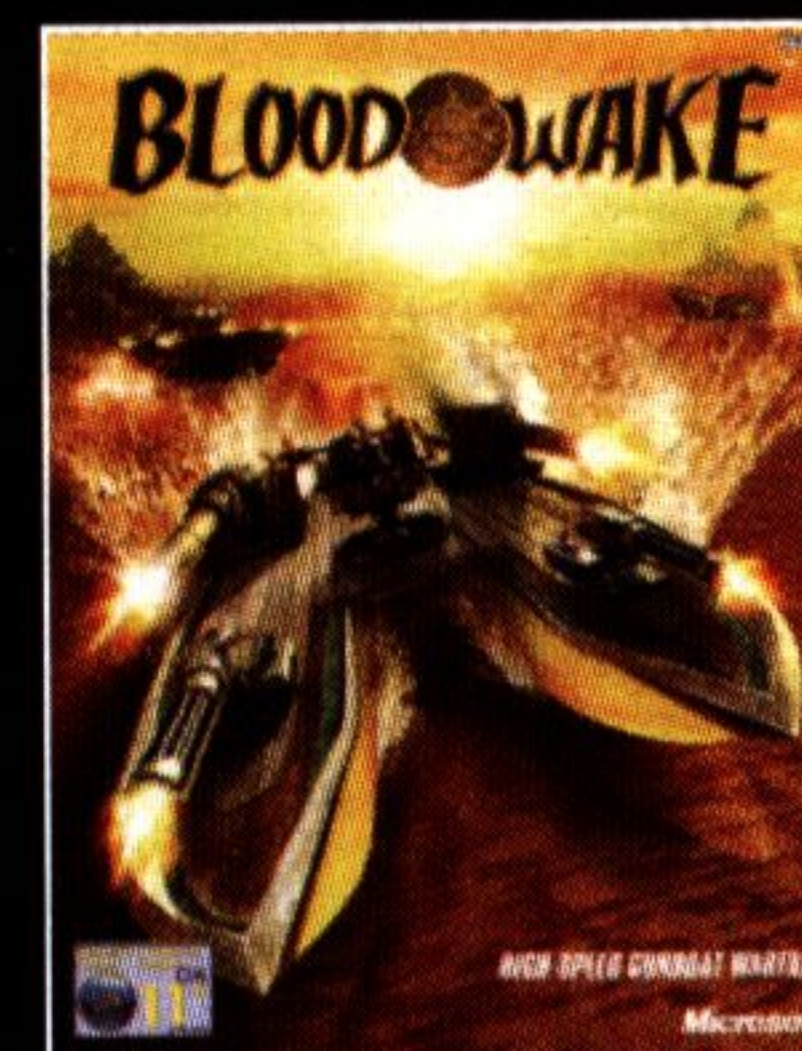
WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU
HAD THIS MUCH FUN IN WATER?



Waters churn. Chain guns blaze, as you seek sweet revenge on the Dragon Sea. After high speed gunboat warfare, sadly, bath time will never be the same again.

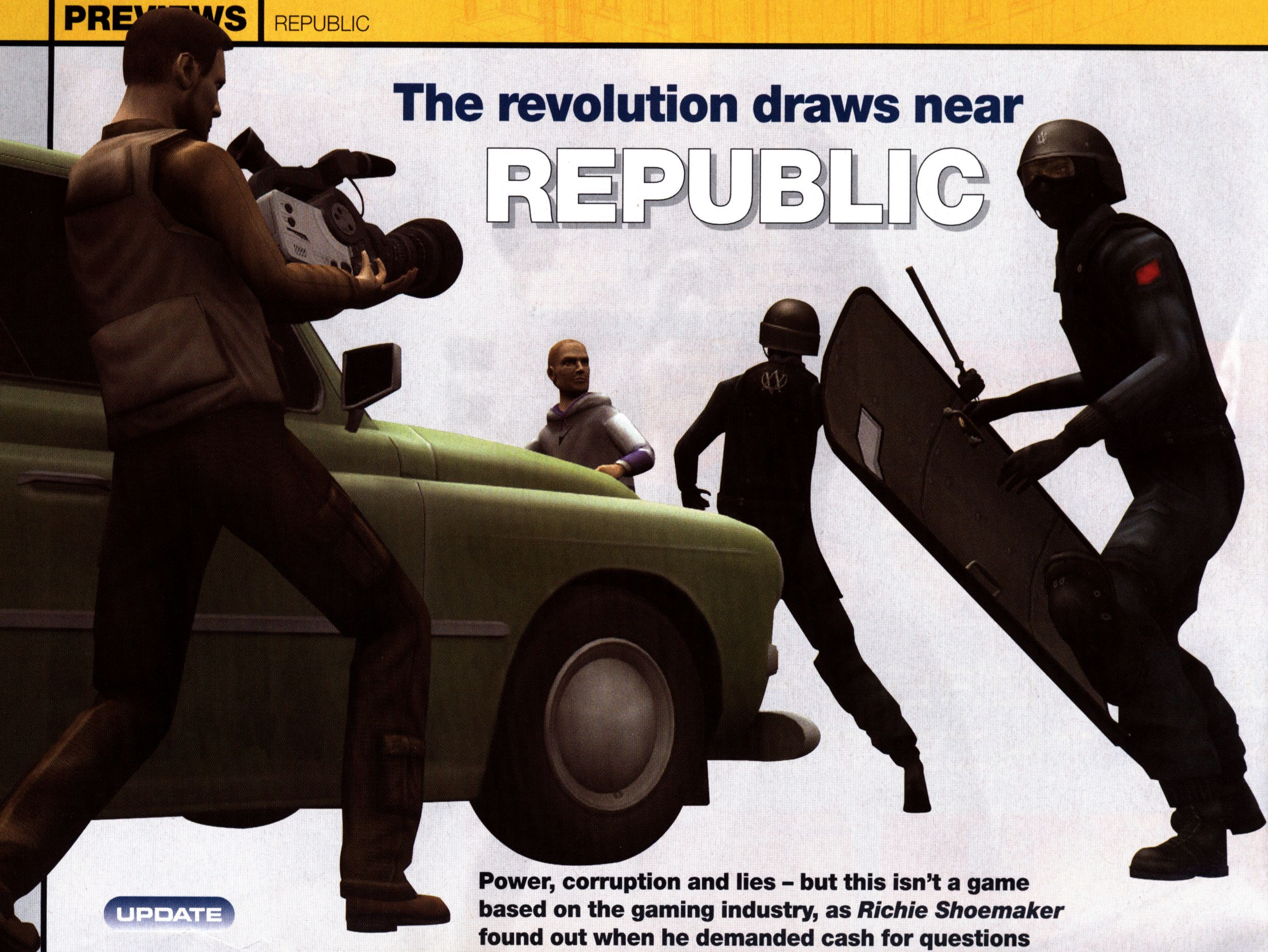
www.xbox.com/uk/bloodwake

PLAY MORE. PLAY BLOOD WAKE.™



The revolution draws near

REPUBLIC



UPDATE

Power, corruption and lies – but this isn't a game based on the gaming industry, as *Richie Shoemaker* found out when he demanded cash for questions

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Elixir Studios

PUBLISHER Eidos

WEBSITE www.elixir-studios.co.uk

OUT Late 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Freeform strategy set across an entire country
- Political intrigue, treachery, anarchy and crime
- Recruit from over a million people, using persuasion, bribery, brainwashing or blackmail
- Rig votes, start riots, use propaganda – or be nice
- Impressive 3D engine offering 'infinite detail', day-night cycles, weather and other gubbins

CV



ELIXIR STUDIOS

Republic may be its debut game, but Elixir has already made plenty of noise

1998 After a few years at Bullfrog and Lionhead, Demis Hassabis forms Elixir and sets himself up in Camden, London. A deal is soon hammered out with publisher Eidos for three games.

1999 Elixir unveils *Republic*'s 3D engine, the Totality engine, to the world, but it's just a tech demo and although impressive, doesn't show much of the game. The same year Demis wins seven medals at the 1999 Mind Sport Olympiad. Clever chap.

2001 *Republic* is showered with countless E3 awards and is officially runner-up as best strategy game on show.

2002 Elixir wins the wooden spoon after crashing out of the inaugural PC ZONE five-a-side football tournament, despite their lovely orange kit.

2003 Having made an obscene amount of money with *Republic*, Elixir wins the second PC ZONE five-a-side football tournament, thanks to new signings Saviola, Del Piero and Jerzy Dudek.

SOME games make your head hurt just thinking about them and if *Black & White*, last year's most ambitious example, made your brain throb in quiet discomfort at its moral ambiguity and wide-reaching gameplay, you'd better pop a couple of analgesic suppositories up your bot before we get onto the subject of *Republic*. Why? Because if you don't you're going to have a right thumper by the end of this preview. There is perhaps no more ambitious, no more

promising game due this year. But the thought of just trying to explain what *Republic* is all about and what it allows you to do is already forcing my brain to think of ever more ingenious ways of escaping its usually roomy and well-aired confines, so you'll forgive me while I sit here typing with a bag of frozen peas balanced on my head and wisps of cotton wool waving from my ears and nostrils. The aforementioned suppositories in place, there's only one way out for my



Every leaf casts its own shadow.



Illegal boxing clubs are wonderful for recruitment, raising cash or just to watch.

“Follow the selfish or altruistic path as you fight your way to the corridors of power – it's up to you”

brain to go and with two litres of Pepsi Max swilling around my bladder, I think I may just about have every exit covered. I suggest for you all to make similar plans.

RED ALERT

As my old English teacher used to say, it's best to start with a single word and in summing up *Republic: The Revolution* there are a fair number that spring to mind. 'Ouch' is the first, one sure to reoccur at regular intervals until the cherry drops kick in, another might be 'aspiring', which doesn't tell you much about the

game, but certainly eludes to the game's leading architect, one Demis Hassabis of *Theme Park* fame. In fact, the only single word that can reliably sum up *Republic's* ambitions is the otherwise diminutive 'big'. Not just big in size, but massive in scope and influence.

Imagine if you will a conjugal meeting of *Black & White* and *The Sims*. Throw in some Orwellian paranoia, a heaped spoonful of *Grand Theft Auto* humour and essence of Mike Singleton's 16-bit classic *Midwinter* and, bingo, you have *Republic: The Revolution*. Well, almost.

REBEL WITH A CAUSE

Like *Black & White*, *Republic* offers us the chance to lead our own destiny, not as a deity, rather as a downtrodden prole in a fictional Soviet-style totalitarian state. Your destiny, if not already evident, is to take political control of the county, though whether you wish to follow the selfish or altruistic path as you fight your way to the corridors of power is up to you. Either way your short-term objectives are the same; to rally support, recruit thugs, convert the



Elixir has captured the Eastern European feel perfectly.

masses to your cause and hopefully start heading the opinion polls. Sounds simple, until you realise your methods of getting from the game's equivalent of Hyde Park Corner to weekend hunting trips with US presidents is so open-ended, the tricks you can employ so varied – both in their methods and morality – that you can understand the cranial pressure we've been under trying to explain how the game might work.

If this were a traditional strategy game, where oil, wood or some fictional goo has to be harvested in order to finance a military operation, things wouldn't be so bad to explain away. Unfortunately *Republic* is about as far removed from the likes of *Command & Conquer* as you can get – the closest your followers will ever be to a tank is standing in front of one with their weekday shopping in the vain hope it won't run them over. But while the road to being head of state is a largely peaceable one, that doesn't mean you'll be spending your time kissing babies and driving around town with a loudspeaker on top of your Trabant. There is the small matter of

your political opposition, who are just as likely to come round to your house and stick electrodes to your balls as they are to stick mud to your reputation – some of them anyway.

SIM-PLY RED

It is perhaps *The Sims* that *Republic* is in many ways closest to. But rather than you taking a voyeuristic interest in watching your character trying to cop off with the next-door neighbour, your alter-ego here has a purpose beyond that of finding a job and decorating the bathroom. As a faceless nobody in a decaying police state, working initially from a ramshackle headquarters at the back of your state-owned flat, it would be something of an understatement to suggest getting anywhere near even the local town hall let alone Novistrana's presidential palace will be easy. Thankfully you're not alone, you initially have one friend and with some persuasion, perhaps a spot of bribery, treachery and malice, you can expect others to join your cause, either by bending ears or breaking bones. Or both.

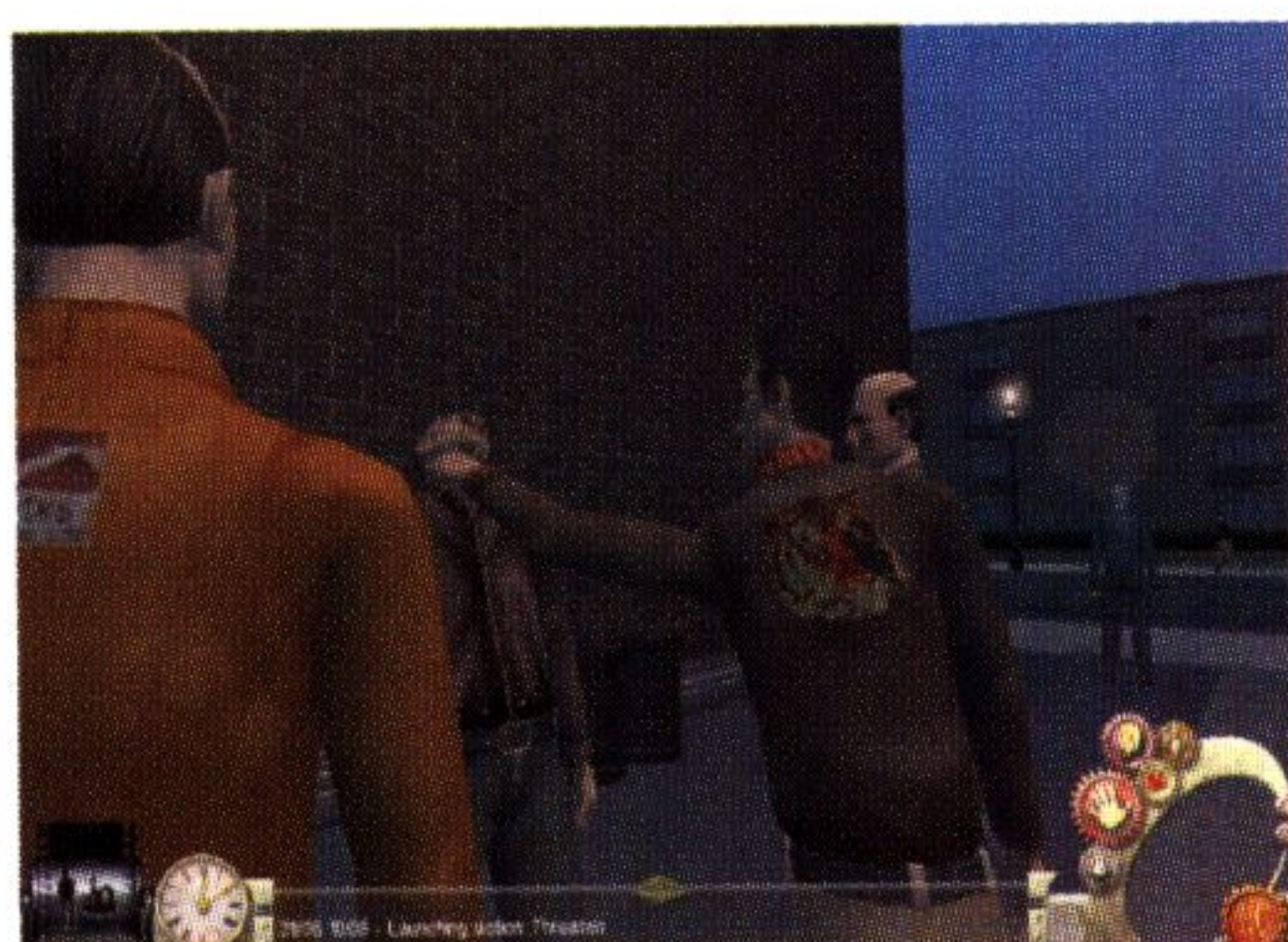
CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

IT'S GOOD BEING BAD

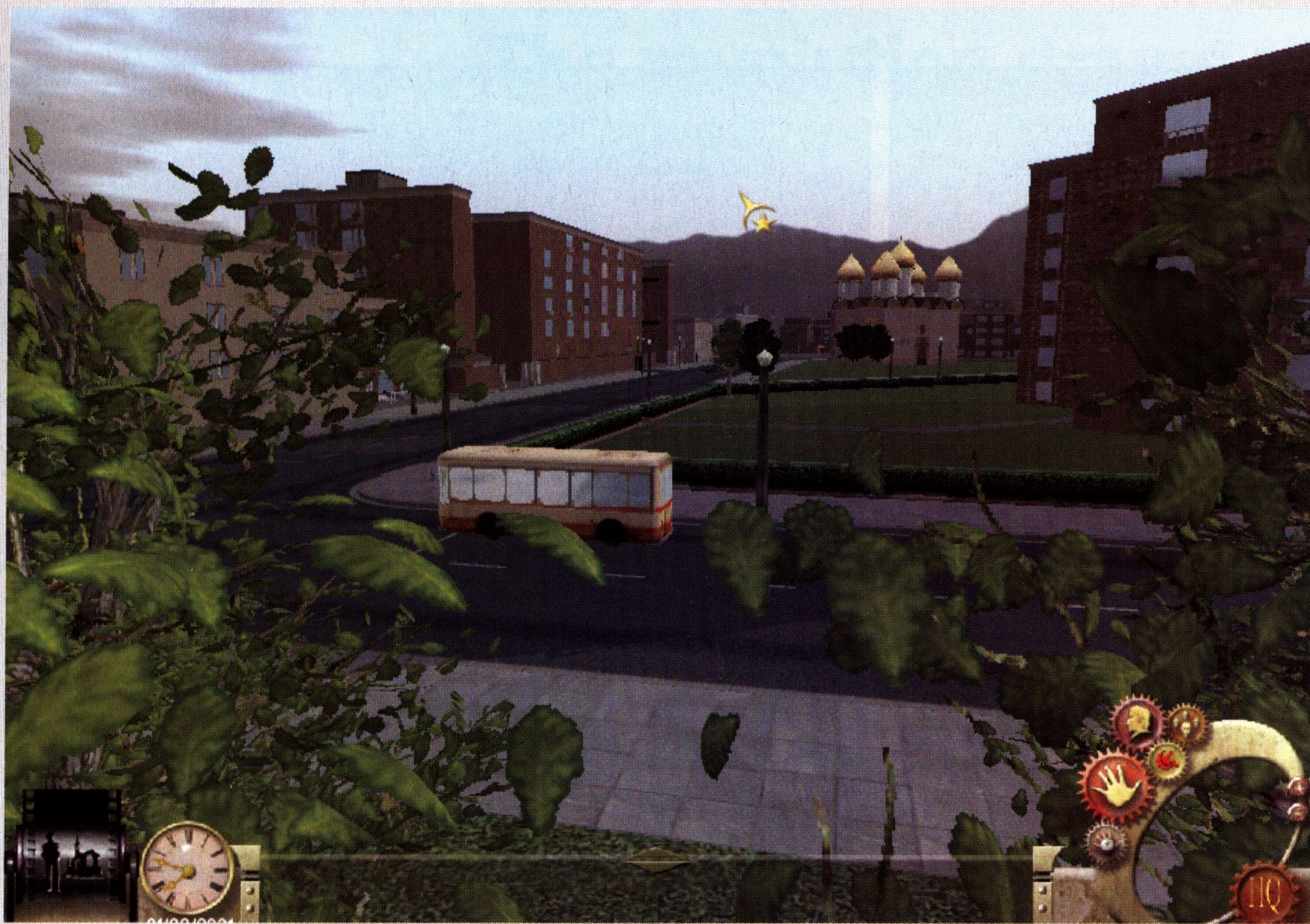
You might be quite happy to fight your way to power using traditional means of persuasion, such as holding peaceful rallies, but if you'd rather employ more underhand methods – let's face it, it's much more fun – you will be able to establish illegal fighting clubs, arrange assassinations or car bomb attacks, or simply instigate a riot at the weekly football match. According to Demis there are plans to add prostitution and drug dealing in order to finance your political plans as well.

Despite the fact that Elixir has dynamically scripted all the animations without having to resort to expensive motion-capture techniques, having seen a few beatings in the game we can happily report the game's many 3D sequences are all incredibly entertaining to watch, almost as much as *Grand*

Theft Auto III is to play. Characters will go at it hammer and tongs, using baseball bats or simply being thrown around by a gang of hooligans. Thankfully it's all done with plenty of humour, as set-upon characters will plead for their lives or try and run away only to be pulled back into the fray by their coat tails. It will be interesting to see how the riots will turn out.



Expect the streets in the final game to be busier than this.



The detail is astonishing.

Of course in order to get into power you have to ensure support from the general population, however, this doesn't mean that as soon as you've persuaded a few thousand citizens you can do with them what you will. Each of the hundreds of thousands of people that live in Novistrana has their own life to lead, a family to support, paid employment (or not as the case may be), a full background and constantly wavering political leanings – all aspects that are intertwined. For example, an out of work labourer previously loyal to one of the game's more liberal political factions might easily be swayed by the hyperbole of a radical fascist organisation if he's desperate enough, which if you've set yourself up as a jackboot-stomping type, will probably be a good thing. In which case why not organise a few rallies and try and instigate a general strike, follow it up with a couple of riots and try and get the whole country sacked. The point is each of the game's little computer people is open to

persuasion, which won't always require you to have a quick chat with them on a park bench (or have one of your thugs wrap said bench around their heads). In fact don't be surprised if countless dozens of people join a scrap on your side without your asking them to – though you can bet they won't give a damn about your promise of tax cuts or child benefit plans, they'll just be up for it.

TRUST NO-ONE

Aside from yourself, the only people you can directly command are your closest aides, of which you can have up to nine in your direct employ. Preaching to the converted is easy enough, but most will be unskilled in the ways of negotiation, rabble-rousing, fighting, assassination, autosuggestion or any of the other 100-odd skills, which means to get the best on your side will require some hard grafting. Then there is no guarantee your right-hand man will always stick with you, he could be tempted to the other side with

money, put under house arrest for no good reason save for his loyalty to you or even assassinated. He may even be double-crossing you. Part of the game is knowing who you can trust. How's your head feeling now?

“Your political opposition are as likely to stick electrodes to your balls as they are to stick mud to your reputation”

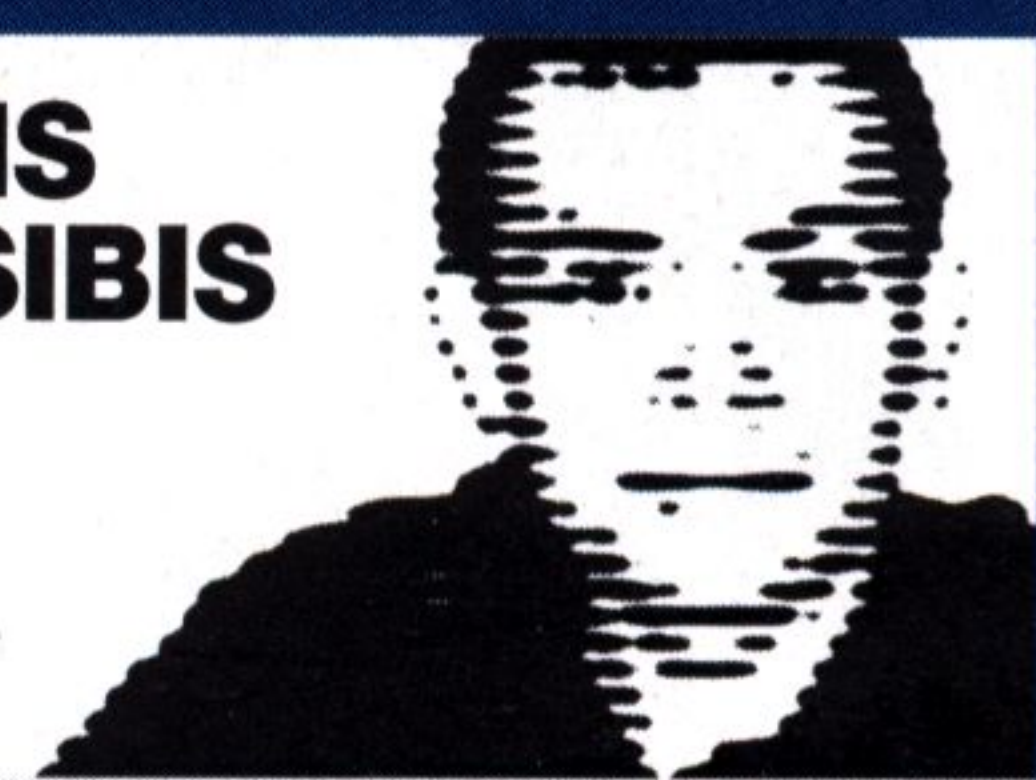
MY BRAIN HURTS

So we have a 2000sq km country with 50 cities of nearly a million unique people. Each of these with a daily routine and dozens of interwoven traits and skills to make use of, hundreds of playable actions to impose or carry out on your supporters and enemies, 16 political factions of various persuasions, dynamic AI, a focused storyline and hundreds of subquests, which you may or may not want to follow. Oh... and one overall

aim – just the one. Now all this would mean nothing if you couldn't see it all in action, but one of the game's many incredible features is that you can zoom anywhere across the map and witness all sorts of incidents that you might

Q&A

DEMIS HASSIBIS



Why, it's Demis Hassibis, Head Republican, here to talk to us about his latest game...

PCZ It's been a while...?

DH Yeah we've made a lot of changes in the last nine months or so. We've ditched the multiplayer and concentrated on the single-player game. Effectively what that has allowed us to do is add a storyline that acts as a backbone to all the freeform play that is carried out throughout the game.

PCZ So no multiplayer whatsoever?

DH Not until after release at least. But it means we've been able to work a lot more on getting the AI absolutely right. Did I mention we've got the lead AI programmer from *The Sims* working for us? He was working on *The Sims* from the very beginning, so it's great that we got him. Actually he's been working on *Republic* for about seven months now.



Hello, something's going down here.

REPUBLICAN SPEECH

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Communication with all the characters in the game is something Elixir want to get just right, so much so that you can't actually 'talk' to anyone in the game just yet – though you can bash their brains out with a large stick. Because of the sheer number of characters and all the problems that localisation of the game across Europe would bring, proper speech is out of the question. Using a text interface, something along the lines of *Grim Fandango*, would surely be the only option then?

“Actually no,” says Demis. “What we'll have will look similar to *The Sims* in that whatever a character is thinking will be shown as an icon above their heads and the choices you have when talking to them will be icon-driven rather than choosing a line of text. If you are trying to recruit someone for example, then the more skilled your guy is at persuasion, the more options they will have to appeal to someone's heart, their conscience or their basic human needs – all of which will depend on the individual you are trying to recruit.”

So if we understand this correctly, if you have a skilled negotiator trying to talk an opponent into telling you where one of his cronies will be, if he's good enough, you can try and talk him around by appealing to his sense of justice – if he has one. Failing that you could just break his kneecaps.



There are 50 towns and cities to control.

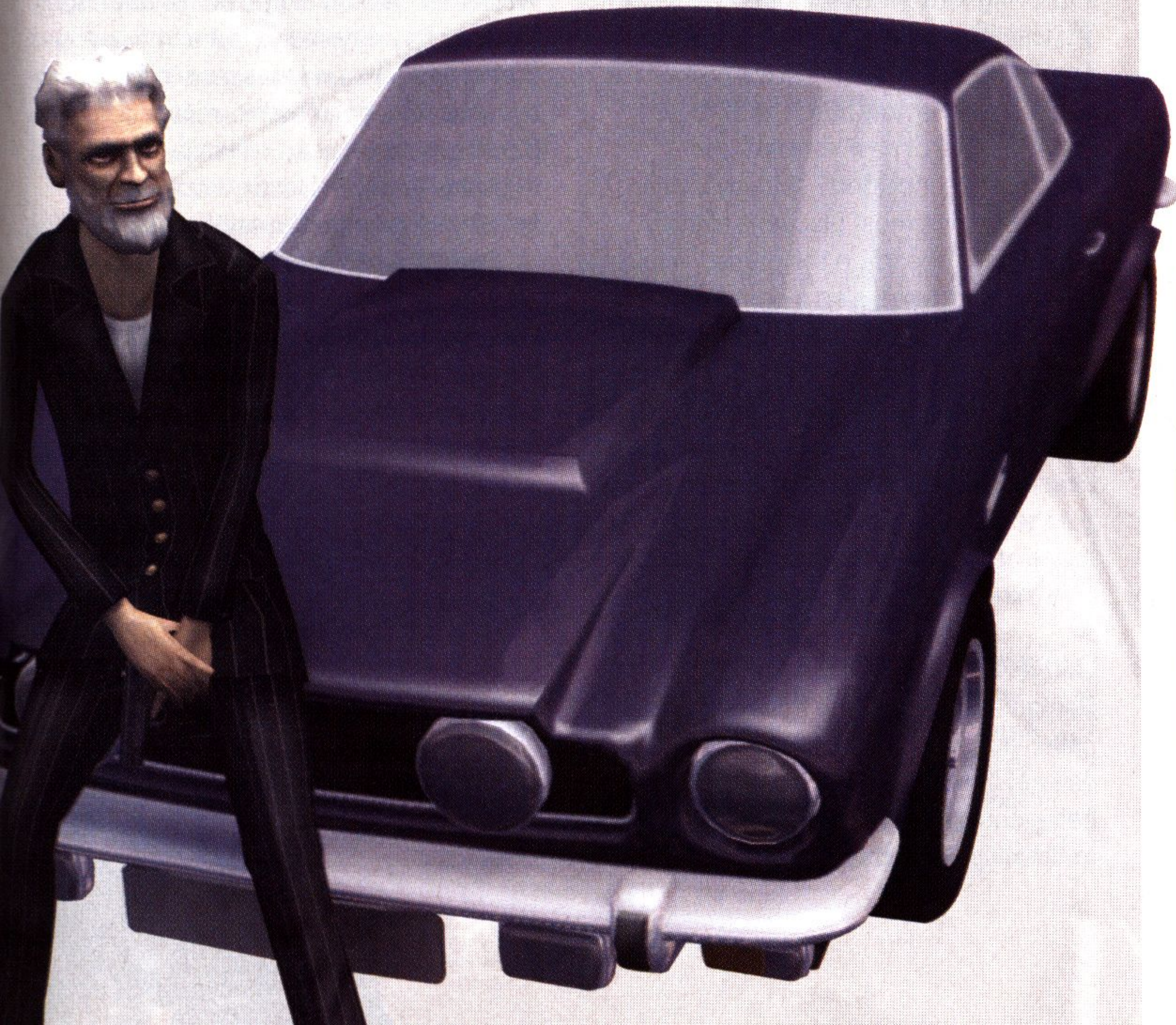
you. But do they? How long until someone caves in? Maybe someone already has, maybe they all have... So you decide to have your lieutenants tailed, by people you trust even less. Will you get the right information back? Will your man realise he is being followed home from work and find out it's you behind it all and join the other side? And if you hadn't have been so bloody nosy, you'd never have known. Aaaaaaargh! ... the voices... must ... stop.

MASSIVE ELECTION

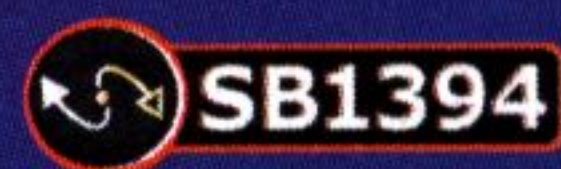
Republic is one of those games you hear about and want to know more. But until you actually see anything of it, or speak at length to the developers about their hopes and fears for the game, it is one that is all too easy to dismiss as too ambitious. Bringing an entire country to life is pretty high in the ambition chart, more so

breathing life into each and every one of its citizens, even if there are only a million of them. And the more you see, the more you want to see, and the more questions you ask, the more the questions keep cropping up and you leave, as I did after this particular visit to the Elixir Studio, asking myself, how are they going to get this thing right, how will they incorporate that? So far evidence suggests what has been done has been done well, so there's no reason to suggest the rest won't be completed in similar fashion.

Like *Black & White*, *Republic* isn't so much a game that's difficult to get your head around, as a simple one that is hard to imagine living up to its lofty ambitions. The key to its success, undoubtedly, will be the AI. Each individual in the game will have to act in a realistic way and be seen to do so – so far they do. So far, so very, very good. **EW**



Sound
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POWER TAMED

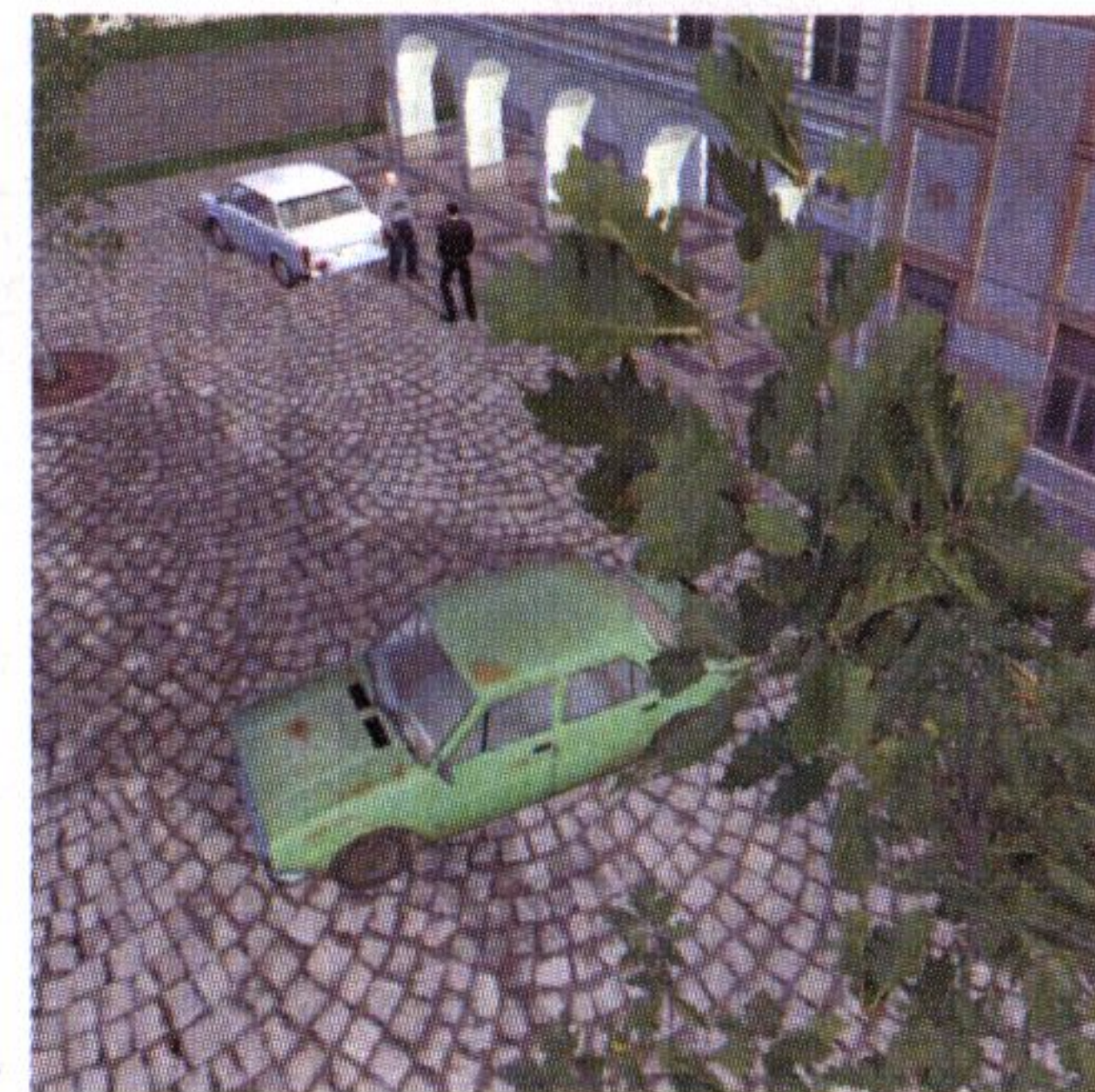
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The new island of Nogova is very, very big apparently.



Now troops can carry over experience.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bohemia Interactive

PUBLISHER Codemasters

WEBSITE www.codemasters.com

OUT June 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Fight on the civilian side for a change
- Resources carry over from mission to mission
- Whole new island to explore
- Improved graphical detail
- This time it's personal

More fun than the Territorial Army...

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: RESISTANCE

Back to the killing fields as *Paul Presley* prepares to fight the power

OK, I MAY have been moaning a few issues back about how hard it is to come up with plotlines when designing new *Operation Flashpoint* missions, so it's probably just as well that I'm not in the paid employ of Bohemia Interactive, the game's creator. This summer we'll be seeing a brand new expansion pack for the Greatest War Game Of All Time™ that not only throws a whole new island, new vehicles, new weapons and new missions at you, but also has a pretty decent storyline to boot. Bastards.



Behind enemy lines.

The resistance of the title comes from one Victor Troska, ex-Russian special forces soldier, now farming crops and living the peaceful life on the sizeable island of Nogova. Along come a large group of renegade Russians soldiers and off to war goes Victor and his rag-tag bunch of civilian rebels. I reckon I could have come up with that given time. What?

INFORMATION WAR

With *Flashpoint* having proved to be gaming's equivalent of sliced bread, it's only natural that Codemasters has started to go all 'games publishery' on us. Hence questions probing the inner heart of *Resistance* simply provoke the usual round of guarded answers and speculation-feeding tidbits. Fair enough. Speculate we shall.

How different is the new island of Nogova to Everon and Malden? "It's much, much bigger, and much better looking," unreveals Codemasters' Jonathan Smith, head of external development regarding *Flashpoint*. "There

are all-new buildings, hi-res textures and new graphical techniques significantly improving key environmental features." Translation – trees and bushes are more tree and bush-like and there's proper T&L support for the new batch of 3D cards.

What kind of new vehicles and weapons are included? "Mostly civilian vehicles, since most plausible military hardware is already in the game," explains Smith, "but there's also a brand new class of weaponry, which should make a real difference to the gameplay." New class of weaponry? It's unlikely that we'll start seeing politically sensitive items such as biological weapons or nukes in the game, but the good money is on advanced forms of explosive hardware – about the only thing really missing from the original.

CARRY ON SERGEANT

Remarkably for a game that has been hailed as one of the closest things you can get to real-life combat and is currently being converted for use by the US Marines for training, Bohemia is claiming that

Resistance will be even more realistic and "offer more freedom" than before. While this 'realism' stops some way short of Victor having psychotic flashbacks during firefights and massacring his own men in a berserker rampage before blowing his own head off while claiming to be the Angel Of Death, it does go as far as having limited mission resources.

"You'll love this so much, it's just great," says Smith in a bizarrely personal assessment of my judgement values. "In the new *Resistance* campaign, equipment and personnel are persistent from mission





Flashpoint receives a huge graphical makeover.

to mission. All resources are limited, and need to be treasured. Lose a guy on one mission, and you'll be one down on the next. Take a little time to go out of your way and raid that distant enemy stockpile, and you might just acquire some crucial new weapons for the battle ahead of you."

So *Resistance* is going to feel more like one long battle rather than a linear sequence of stand-alone missions? "It brings an RPG-style element to the game," Smith explains. "You'll find yourself getting genuinely attached to favourite recruits and modifying your tactics to take account of the resources at your disposal." Not so attached that you'll spend hours wringing your hands in grief, shouting "Why? In God's name WHY?" at the heavens when a comrade takes one in the gut, but attached enough to make you at least think a bit more before making a tactical decision. Which is no bad thing.

MOD'S ARMY

Smith admits that Codemasters and Bohemia are "really, really excited" about the impact these subtle gameplay changes are going to have on the single-player game, but as veteran *Flashers* know, that's only half the fun.

"Bohemia is completely rewriting the netcode to function even more effectively over the Internet," says Smith when asked about the multiplayer side of the game. "They're also adding a few important new features – but we can't confirm them right now, as they're still unproven." However *PC ZONE* understands one such feature to be an in-game server browser, finally eliminating all those wasted hours negotiating Gamespy adverts and getting kicked out of sessions because they started two seconds before All-Seeing Eye managed to load up the game.

Budding mission makers aren't being ignored either. Although my own lofty plans in this particular area didn't exactly bear much fruit (see *PCZ* issue 114), Bohemia is promising to include some "powerful new scripts" according to Smith which should make life a little easier for all of us. Both publisher and developer have been

overwhelmed by the way the editing community grew up around *Flashpoint* and although nothing concrete is planned at the time of writing, Smith does hint at continued support for the creatives out there, sitting at home inventing wars in their underwear (so to speak). At least there's the new island, weapons and civilian vehicles to mess about with while the pros decide what to do for you next.

All of which means there's something for everyone (except pacifists and people who only use their PCs for *Championship Manager* sessions or downloading barnyard porn). We'd still like to see more noise being made about a full-on sequel than just a constant stream of add-ons and expansions, but until Bohemia and Codemasters see fit to do the decent thing (and just remember who it was that pushed *Flashpoint* into the public eye in the first place yeah?), we'll just have to settle for life in the Nogovian resistance. At least the scenery's nice. **[PCZ]**

Q&A

JONATHAN SMITH



Codemasters' own man in Nogova takes time out from rearing a family to answer some questions... well, one

PCZ Marek [Spanel – Flashpoint's creator] had previously said to us that once Flashpoint was finished that would be it. No add-ons, sequels or anything. What changed his mind?

JONATHAN Obviously, caught up in the excitement and trauma of development, you have to be completely focused on the task in hand. Once it's finally over, however, I don't think it's particularly uncommon to spend some time thinking about the future; and, with *Flashpoint*, there were just so many possibilities for further expansion that *Resistance* was actually a very natural move.

KNOCK-OFF NOGOVAS

NOT QUITE A WHOLE NEW ISLAND, MORE OF A PAINT JOB

Sure, the expansion pack brings you a whole new island, new vehicles and weapons and a new campaign to work through, but while you wait for the June release you could always pop over to The OFP Editing Center (www.ofpeditingcenter.com) and get much the same thing for free. Just about anything you can think of is available for download, from snowy and jungle-based mods for the existing maps to a rifle-toting 'babe' wearing a camouflage bra.



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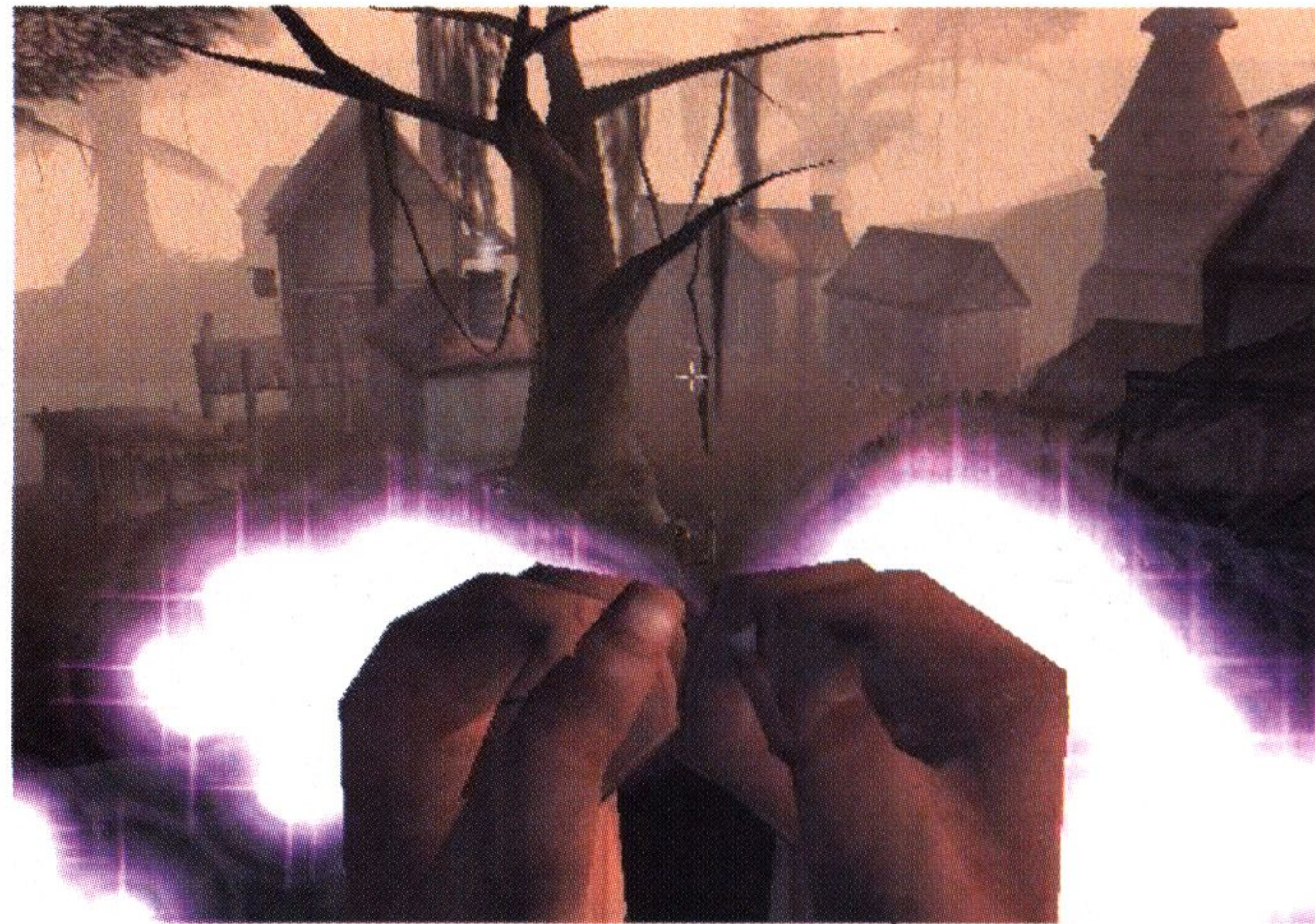
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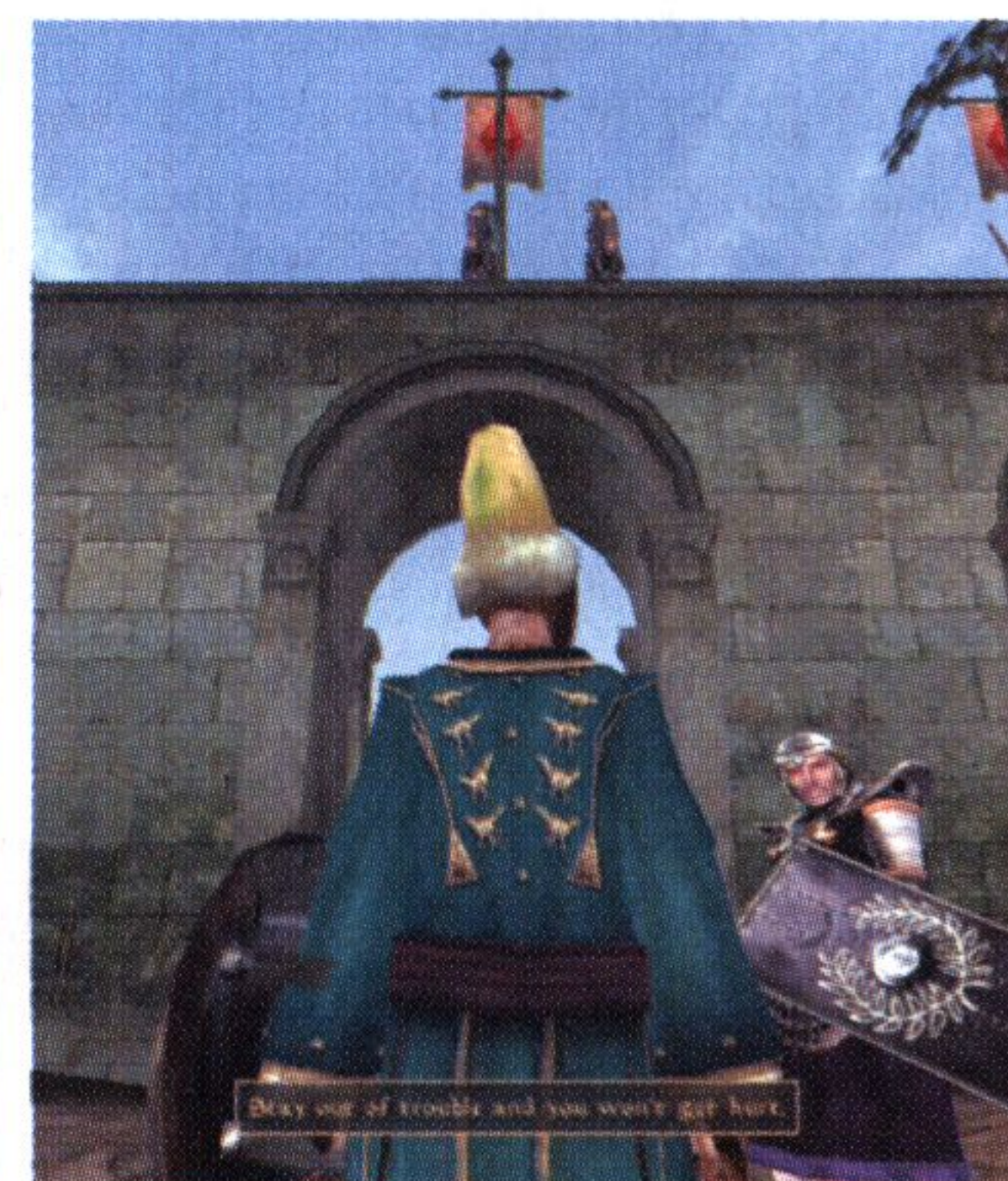
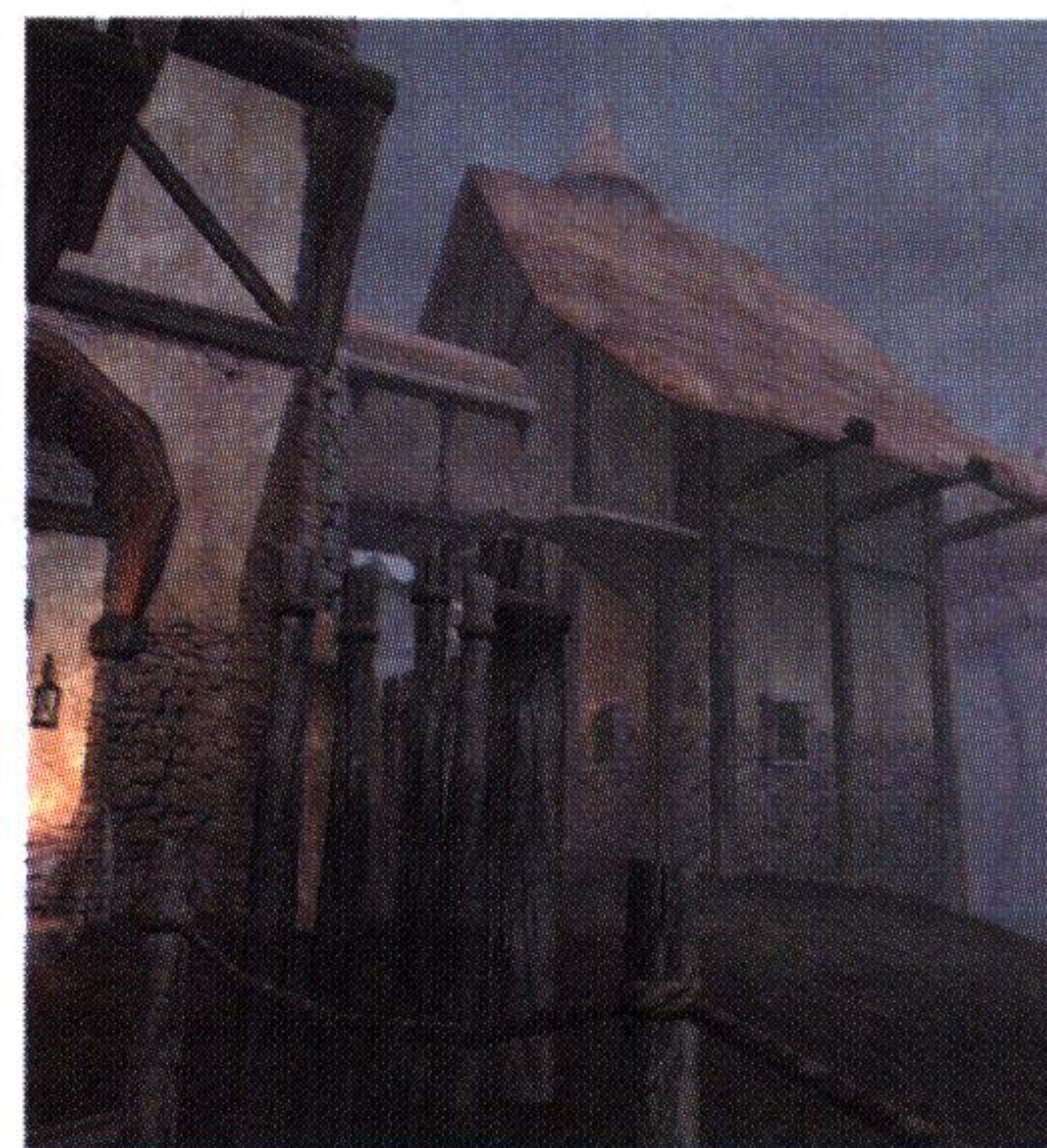
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Some of the towns are huge, like this one for example.



Some of the locations are deeply atmospheric.



The official sequel to *Daggerfall* is almost here

ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

UPDATE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bethesda Softworks

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft

WEBSITE www.elderscrolls.com

OUT June

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Beautiful game environment with hugely detailed towns and villages.
- Design your character class exactly the way you want to.
- In-depth information on all the places and people in the game from NPCs

Chris Anderson is playing preview code and keeps telling anyone who will listen 'this is going to be big'

IF YOU'VE never played *Daggerfall*, consider yourself lucky. It was a sprawling mess full of randomly generated quests that were terminally dull and a huge gameworld that had virtually nothing of interest in it. The one thing that was interesting about *Daggerfall* however, was that it was hugely ambitious. Bethesda

tried to create a huge world that was perfect for random exploration but unfortunately, they failed. They haven't this time. Even from the time I've spent playing the preview code thus far, I can tell you now that *Morrowind* is so much better than *Daggerfall* in every way that comparisons between the two are pointless.

The concept

is the same: a huge gameworld with many NPCs and quests and freedom to explore, but this time round the graphics are beautiful (this is now officially the best-looking role-playing game ever), the quests are not only well-designed but they play a part in how your role in the game develops, and the character development system is hugely flexible to the point where you can literally design your own class if you put enough time into it.

As you can see from the screenshots here, the game looks absolutely stunning. Gorgeous landscapes appear literally everywhere you go, and every town in the game has its own unique theme with artwork and atmosphere to match. The attention to detail is literally stunning. Of course, it remains to be seen how *Morrowind* holds up over extended playing periods. I've been playing for two days and haven't even got into the main plot yet because there's so much to see and do everywhere I go, but you can rest assured that the signs are very good indeed that we have a very special game

on our hands. If, however, the main theme of the game doesn't grab you, you can always redesign it with the help of the TES Construction Kit.

ANYTHING THEY CAN DO...

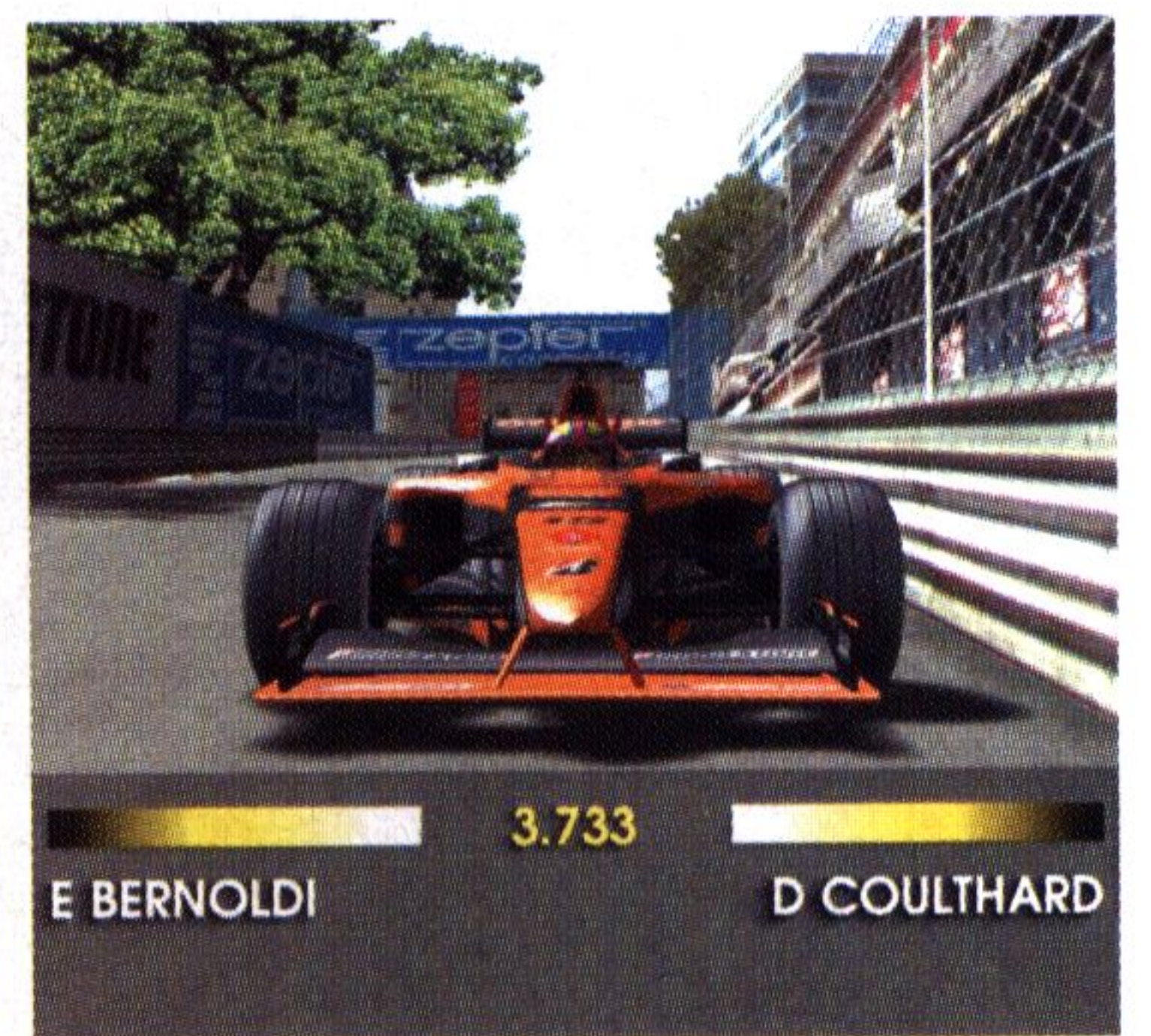
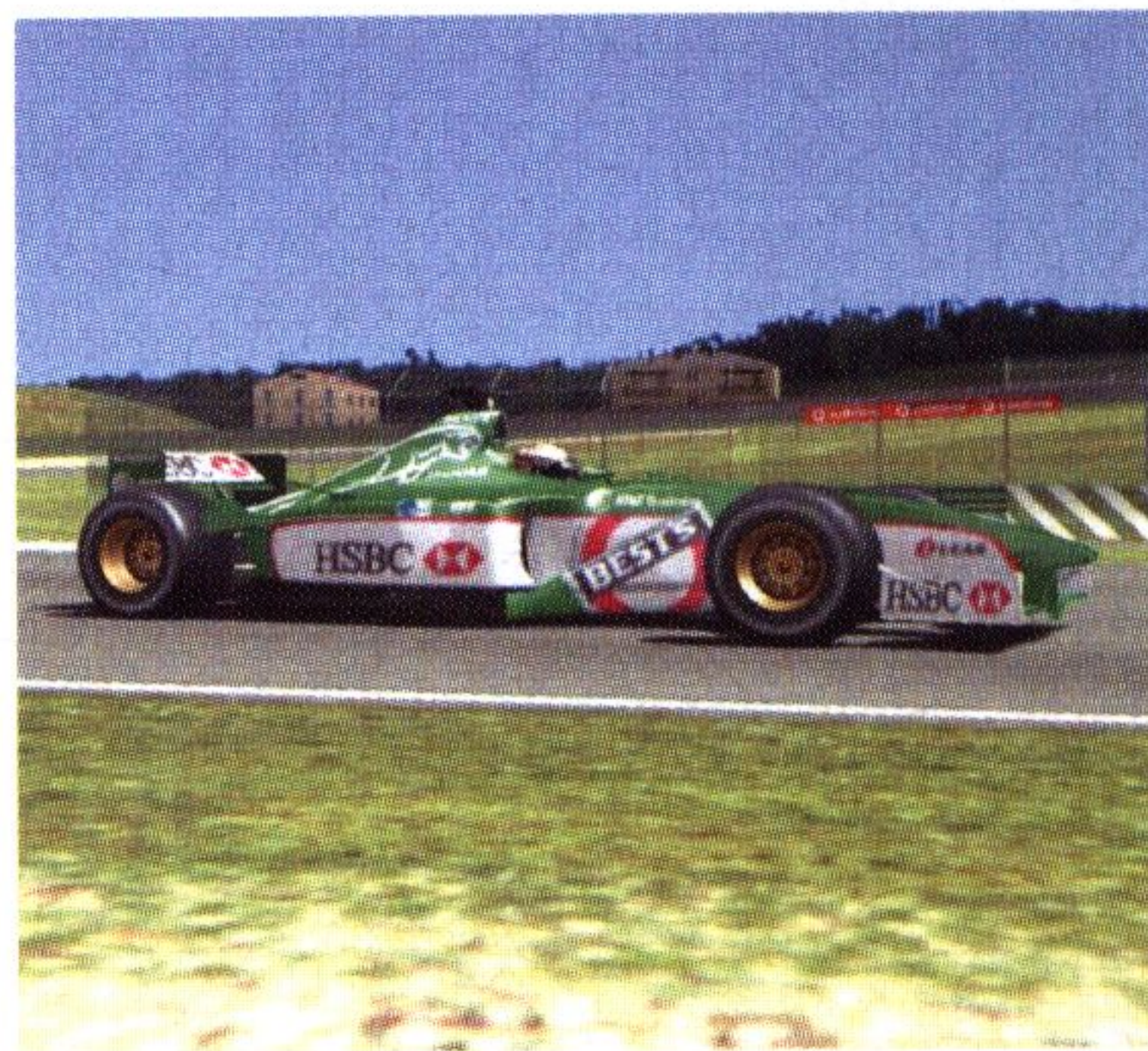
Bethesda is planning to give away the tools they used to create *Morrowind* with the game. Create your own armour designs, mess about with the towns and NPCs, give them new dialogue, make new quests, you name it, you can (probably) do it with the TES design tools. This goes a long way to making up for the fact there is no multiplayer option in the game. With a gameworld as attractive and full of character as this one, you can fully expect people to spend a long time creating their own versions of *Morrowind*, and of course they'll put them straight up on the Net as soon as they've finished.

The future looks very bright for *Morrowind* – tune in next issue for a full in-depth review. You know it's going to be good, but how good? Well, you'll just have to wait and see. **EW**





Expect the usual amount of anal attention to detail.



Animated pit crews are a welcome addition.

Playing with the formula... GRAND PRIX 4

Paul Presley discovers if Geoff Crammond, a man driven by success, can continue to defy expectations with his latest effort

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Simergy/MicroProse
PUBLISHER Infogrames
WEBSITE www.infogrames.com
OUT June

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's the latest GP title from Geoff Crammond
- GPS data used for recreating realistic track detail
- Claims to have the most advanced graphics yet
- The GPedia, which spells an end to incomprehensible petrol-head jargon

"It's not as though *Grand Prix 4* redefines the genre, but it's a start"

ONE OF THE trickiest jobs in this business must surely be PR manager on a new Formula One title. What in the name of Henry Kelly's arse can you say about them?

"We've got a stunning new graphics engine!" So have they all, mate. With every passing racer we get slightly better tree quality, more realistic dust clouds or a marginally shinier paint job on the chassis.

"Our tracks are all modelled to within nano-millimetres of the real thing! You'll feel every bump and dip!" Every F1 game that arrives seems to have had a team of graphic artists treading over every blade of grass, every rock and pebble at every circuit in the world just so they can boast the most realistic tracks ever.

"Our AI is unparalleled! You'll swear they were real drivers!" By which you mean that they'll hug the racing line like brain-dead automatons, occasionally

overtaking the slower cars but never once acknowledging that you actually exist in their world as they happily slam right into the back of you on an empty straight.

Truth is, every Formula One game is pretty much the same as every other Formula One game. There may be massive differences going on under each development team's bonnet in the way the physics are coded and the package is put together. But to you, Johnny Punter, it's all realistic looking cars driving around realistic looking tracks. The only way to tell them apart is the packaging.

PANIS ENVY

Which is why it was all the more refreshing to see something other than all of the above being peddled at the recent *Grand*



Prix 4 launch. Yes, all the shiny trees and things were being touted about, but there was also something new in Geoff Crammond's latest assault on the genre. Something called the GPedia.

OK, it's little more than an interactive F1 encyclopaedia but it does have the very handy function of acting as an idiot's guide to tuning your car. Finally. Admit it, like me you've often felt like trying an ultra-realistic race in one of the other F1 titles only to find that as soon as you're faced with the dozens of screens detailing suspension dampening, camber realigning and rear-wing lift ratios you've given up and gone straight back to the Reverse Racing First Corner Pile Up Challenge. Well, the GPedia is designed to take you through it all. Step-by-step guides, tips from the experts (the Arrows team in this case), detailed breakdowns – everything.

SEPANGS OF DOUBT

OK, it's not as though *GP4* redefines the genre, but it's a start. Otherwise it's F1 business as usual. The latest graphics, the latest teams (well, last season's thanks to the FIA's stupidly restrictive licensing deals), the latest track detail (GPS modelled this time for ultra-ultra realism), the latest AI routines, etc, etc. True, a hands-on with the game at the launch gave a pretty impressive ride, but we'll soon be able to tell you in a detailed review whether or not it has enough gas in the tank to really stand out. **EW**



Geoff Crammond has devoted nearly 20 years to F1 games, and it shows



Spell effects are impressive, as you would expect.



"Look out behind you. No really."

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Wolfpack Studios
PUBLISHER Swing Entertainment
WEBSITE www.shadowbane.com
OUT TBC

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Hugely flexible character development system
- Entire game based around player-versus-player combat
- Player-made buildings and towns

It's massive, it's multiplayer, it's...

SHADOWBANE

The next 'big thing' in online fantasy RPGs is coming your way.
In-house beta-tester: Chris Anderson

CAST YOUR MIND back, if you will, to the very beginnings of the online RPG market. In the beginning, while many companies toyed with the idea of bringing their titles online, there was only one company brave enough to risk spending time and money creating a new genre. That company was Origin, and the game was *Ultima Online*. You may argue that Origin had something of a safety net by using a brand name that was synonymous with the best the RPG genre had to offer, but nonetheless, those first tentative pioneering steps created a genre which is fast becoming overcrowded in today's market. The main reason *Ultima Online* succeeded (apart from the obvious advantage of having the *Ultima* name) was it literally forced gamers into player-versus-player combat (PvP) and provided an adrenaline rush never experienced before on PC as gamers fought real people on the Net for supremacy in *UO*. Since then, *UO* has been toned down to a large degree. There are now towns and areas where you can travel safely if you don't want to get involved in PvP, and much of the gameworld is considered 'safe' for travelling and exploration. So where does that leave gamers who are

still desperate for their online fantasy PvP fix? Enter stage left: *Shadowbane*.

KILL, OR BE KILLED

Shadowbane is designed from the ground up to fully support every facet of PvP imaginable. Player-made cities and towns will be the rule rather than the exception, and unless you quickly gain membership to a good player guild you will be open to attack from all other players in the game as soon as you set foot outside the initial newbie training grounds, and yes you will lose money and items to them if they successfully beat your brains out and loot your corpse. *Shadowbane* won't be for the faint of heart, and all those who left *Ultima Online* en masse to go to *EverQuest* in order to get away from all the player killers are advised to stay as far away from *Shadowbane* as possible.

Designer Wolfpack believes there is a big market for player-versus-player combat, and it is backing this claim by going wholly PvP right from the start. This is a brave move, and to get it right will be no easy task. From the beginning every hardcore PvPer in existence will be out to create a class that is designed purely for success in PvP. This gives Wolfpack

WHY PVP?



If you don't understand the appeal of player-versus-player combat the odds are you've never gone head-to-head with real players in games such as *Quake III* or *Counter-Strike* and experienced the adrenaline rush of fighting against real opponents as opposed to computer enemies with predictable AI. *Shadowbane* will not be the first online RPG to offer PvP, but it will be the only game on the market that is PvP only. *Anarchy Online*'s limited PvP proves that mixing PvP areas with safe ones simply does not cut the mustard. In *Shadowbane*, there will be no safe haven. This is the real thing – get 'good' or get 'dead'.





Think twice before you attack. Your enemy may look like a melee type but in *Shadowbane* he could easily be a caster too.

something of a headache when it comes to balancing the classes for PvP capability. Given the diversity and flexibility of the character development system and the almost endless possibilities for unique character combinations, it will be almost impossible to completely balance all classes for PvP. But since most of the PvP is expected to be between rival guilds, many of the players will be playing support roles rather than being directly involved in combat. Exactly what role you choose to play in the great scheme of things is entirely up to you, thanks to one of the best character development models we have ever seen in a RPG.

BE WHO YOU WANT TO BE

While there are only four initial classes to choose from at character creation time (fighter, mage, healer and rogue), as soon as your character hits level ten you get to choose a subclass which determines how your character will finally develop through his later levels (very *Dark Ages Of Camelot* I must say). There are 14 subclasses to choose from, and you can change the course of your character dramatically at level ten, depending on

which subclass you choose. For example, a fighter may decide to change at level ten to a warlock, which means although he retains his inherent fighting skill she becomes capable of also casting spells, which makes him a good all-rounder (and probably a good bet for PvP too). On top of this you can also choose between sets of disciplines which give you new skills and spells. This kind of flexibility in developing your character means you rarely meet someone with the same class and skill set as you, and it puts *EverQuest's* static race/class combinations to shame.

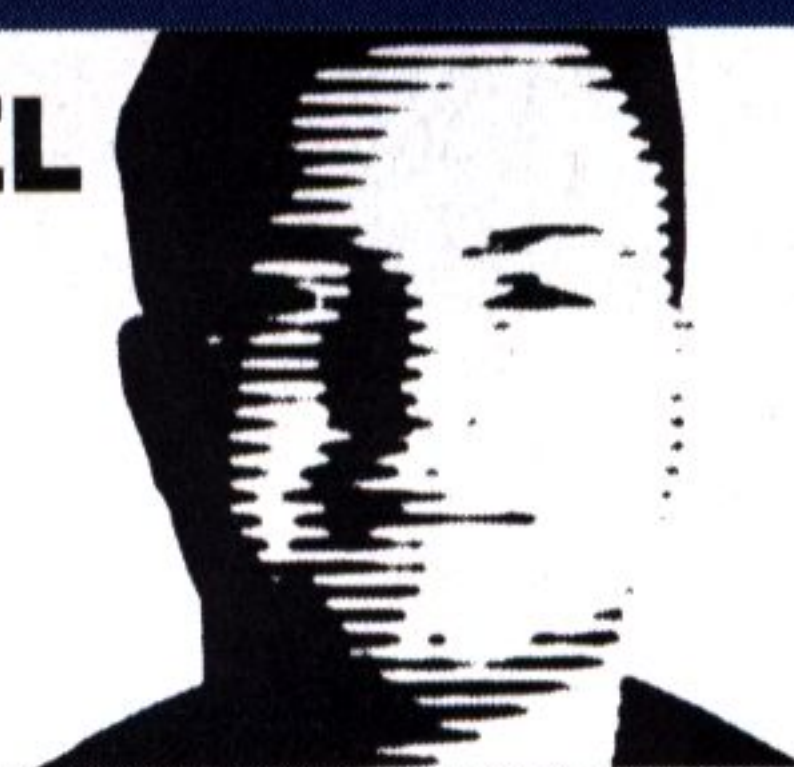
The heavy bias towards PvP is not the only thing *Shadowbane* has in common with *Ultima Online*. The use of a third-person view also hints strongly at influences from Origin's classic, although while *UO* uses a fixed 2D viewpoint, *Shadowbane* is fully 3D and you can change the camera any way you wish according to preference. While the third-person camera is adequate in most situations (although it feels decidedly awkward to use at first), you have to wonder why a first-person viewpoint is not offered as an option. So many people are used to

using a first-person viewpoint now that they may feel a little alienated at having to go back to an 'outside' view for *Shadowbane*. Wolfpack says there is a first-person viewpoint under test but it may never make it into the game if they don't feel it works for the gameplay. We'll keep you posted on this as we get more news on it. **[PVP]**

"In *Shadowbane* there will be no safe haven. This is the real thing – get good or get dead"

Q&A

MICHAEL WRUCK



We caught up with Michael Wruck, head of support on *Shadowbane*. This is what he had to say for himself

PCZ What's the first game you ever played?

MICHAEL The first computer game I ever played was the 'famous' *Pool Of Radiance* back in 1988 on my first 286 PC.

PCZ What's the best game you ever played?

MICHAEL Determining the best game I ever played is really hard. *Deus Ex* comes to my mind instantly but I remember the endless LAN Sessions with *Duke Nukem 3D* (not best game but the most fun I can remember). I think the best game in terms of playability, features, fun and long-term value is still the original *Civilization*.

PCZ What are you playing at the moment?

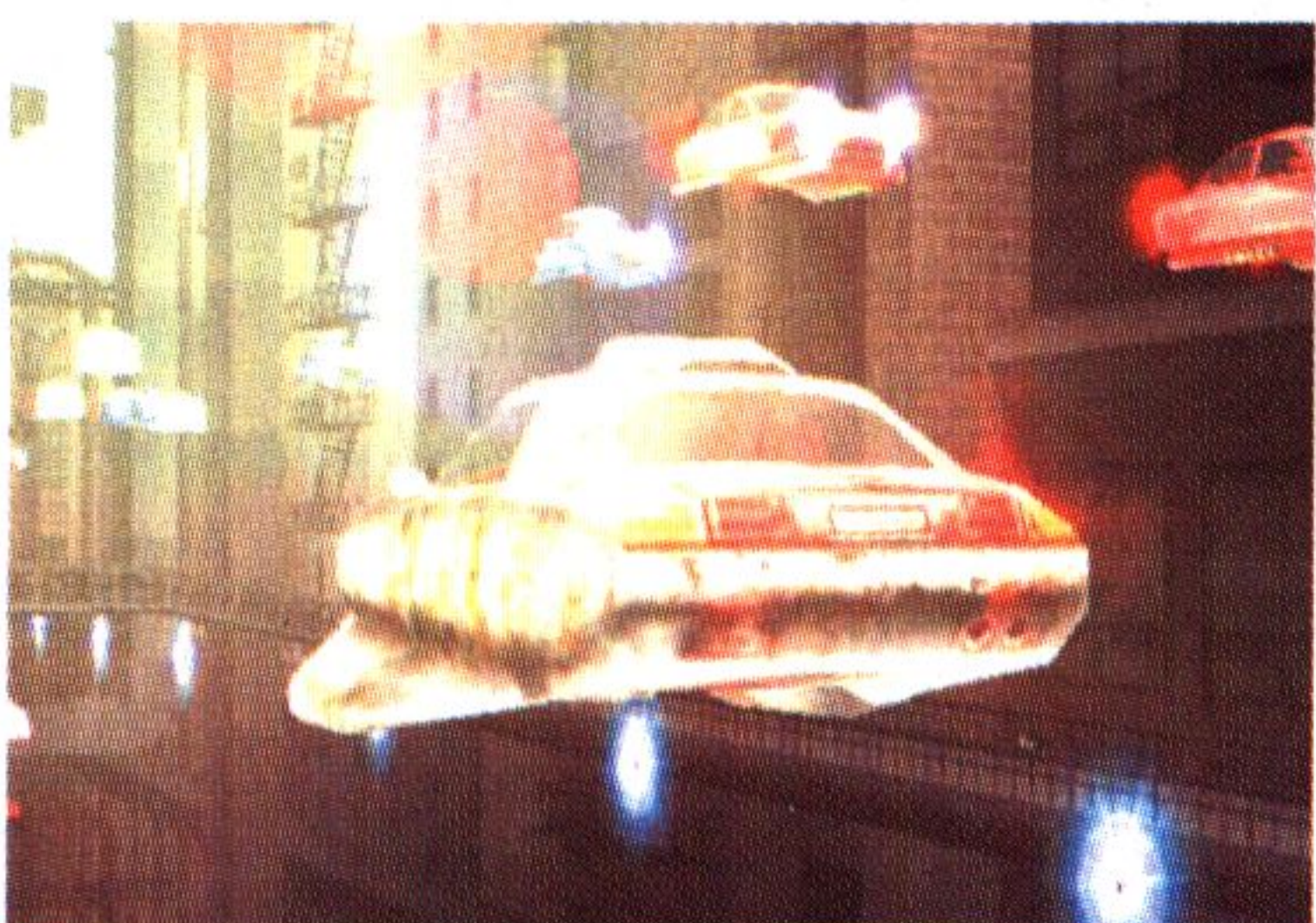
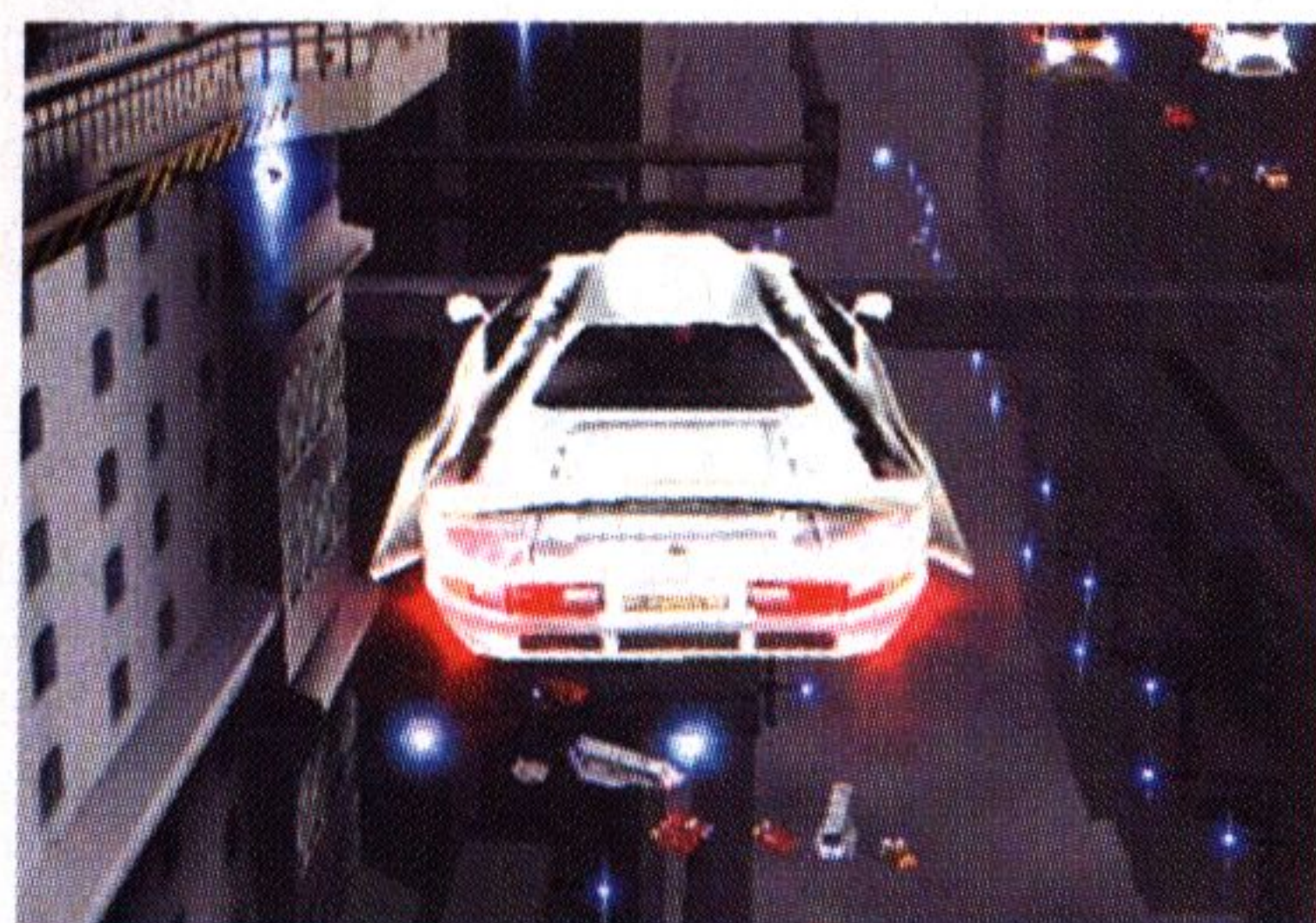
MICHAEL Next to the *Shadowbane* beta I've played mostly *Civ 3* and a bit of *Medal Of Honor* in the last two months. A friend made me look into *World War II Online* recently as well.

PCZ What other online RPGs have you played?

MICHAEL I played *Ultima Online* right from the beginning and jumped on the *EverQuest* train later on. I took a deep look into *Asheron's Call* and *Anarchy Online* when they were in beta, but I did not buy them when they shipped. I played *Dark Age Of Camelot* for a time to check out the *Realm War* feature, but honestly I must admit that I never reached a really high level due to a lack of spare time.

PCZ How will *Shadowbane* change the world?

MICHAEL I think *Shadowbane* will be definitely better than the competition when it comes to interaction with the gaming world and other players. With *Shadowbane*, the player can actually "change the world" for the first time. In the long run the player cities will be much more important than the "indestructible" starting cities. So the players have the ability to actually build up the major political and economic powers for the gaming world.



Racing around New York in the 24th century will take on a whole new dimension as you bob and weave through several lanes of traffic.

High in the New York sky...

BEAM BREAKERS

Martin Korda jumps on a 24th century floater and gets racing. Floater as in floating car that is

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Similis
PUBLISHER Fishtank Interactive
WEBSITE www.similis.com
OUT June

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- 360 degree fully-3D racing environments
- 57 Missions
- It's like *Crazy Taxi* in the sky
- More than 30 vehicle types

CV

SIMILIS

Better known for their PC to MAC conversions (including *Settlers 2* and *Sheep*), Similis has also released several console games. *Beam Breakers* (and the forthcoming *C.O.N.S.E.A.L.*) signal a bold step into the PC arena.

2001 *Moorhuhn Winter-Edition*
 A simplistic console-converted point-and-shoot game in which you fire at cutesy characters that pop up sporadically on your screen.

THOSE OF YOU familiar with pretentious Luc Besson sci-fi flick *The Fifth Element* will be instantly at home with the world of *Beam Breakers*. Set in the far off future (2374 to be precise), you find yourself in the role of a taxi-cab driver (like Bruce Willis only poorer, more out of shape and considerably less attractive to women) flying round skyscrapers of New York in your gravity defying vehicle. I know, you think you've seen this all before, right? Well before you turn over the page in disgust, spitting hatred at *Beam Breaker's* apparent lack of originality, suck back the venom and take a deep breath, because there's much more on offer here than you might think. Calmer now? Good.

FLOATING IN THE HOOD

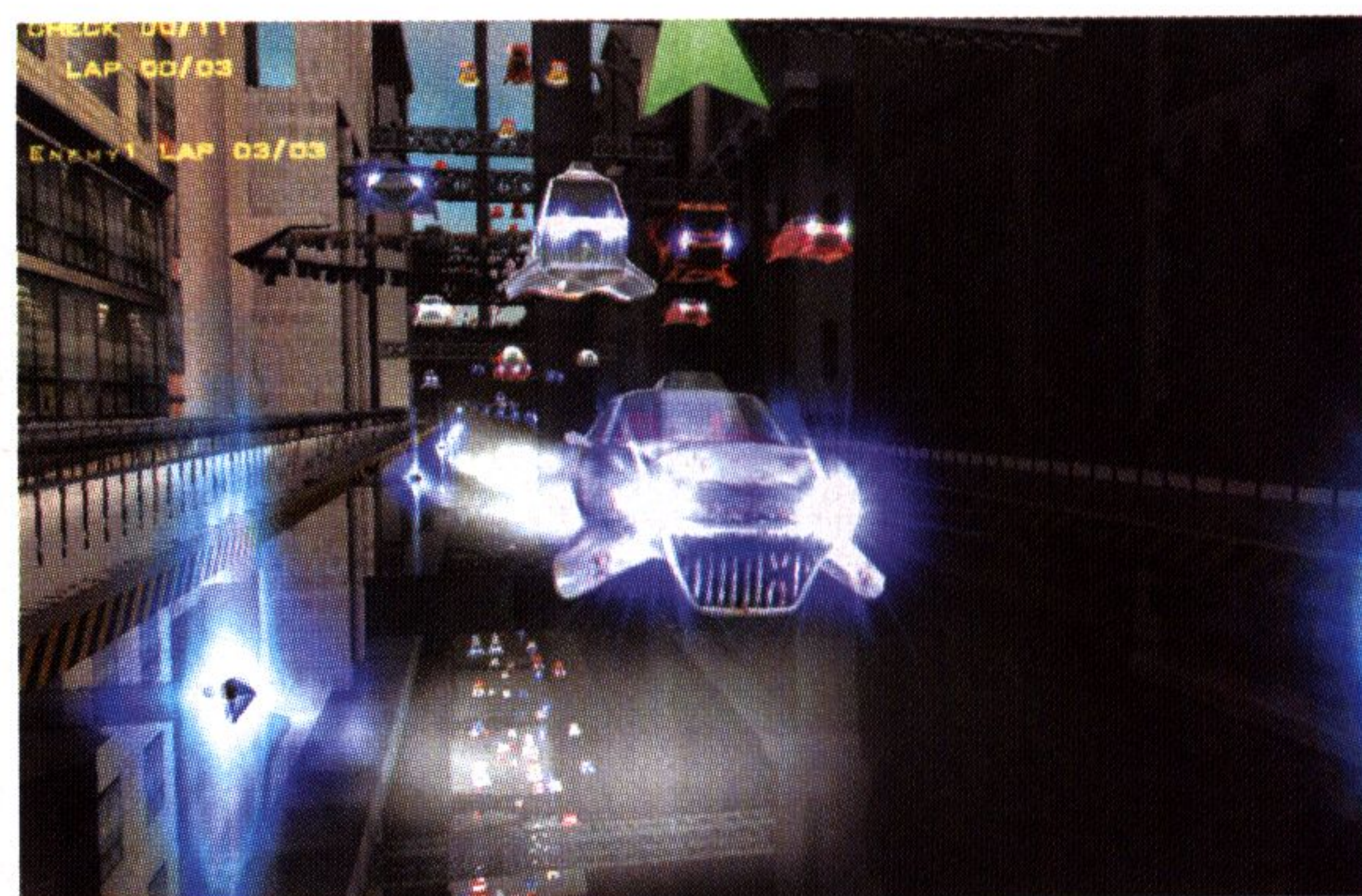
Initial impressions inevitably bring you to the conclusion that this is little more than a simple hover-car racer, set in a congested and hideously oversized futuristic city. Squint violently and move closer to the screen, though, and you'll soon find that this is merely one branch of *Beam Breakers'* gameplay tree. Initially charged with driving around the sprawling metropolis of New York in your sewing machine powered vehicle, you'll find yourself happily chugging round, picking

up passengers and earning a meagre wage barely adequate enough to power your car and house your shuffling body. Until that is, a gang leader from Little Italy (where else) flops into your cab, and squeals in an unconvincing Mafioso accent that he can lead you away from this endless drone of mundanity and poverty into a world of excitement, and more importantly, hard cash. Being a weak willed and of course poverty stricken less-than-model-citizen, you instantly agree to all his terms, and generous bloke that he is, he instantly charges you with the task of stealing a car and bringing it back to him while avoiding a kicking from the local constabulary. Easy.

RACING AWAY

Of course it's not, but that's the point. Before long you'll find yourself embroiled in a gang-warfare type scenario, where five factions battle it out among each other for territory and respect. These are gained in several ways, one method being through a set of daring, law-breaking races, whereby the winner takes both the cars and the territory from his defeated opponents. But of course you're never going to get anywhere chugging round in a steam powered heap of junk, meaning you'll have to find an alternative source of





You thieving bloody kids, nicking the wheels off my taxi, taking away my livelihood, stealing the bread from my mouth. Oh hold on a minute...

income in order to buy an upgrade, and running errands for your new found Italian-American friends turns out to be by far the most profitable of your options. Cue daring car napping raids, destruction missions and decoy runs to distract the infuriatingly persistent police, who try to force you into tight corners in an attempt to dash your vehicle and send you plummeting a thousand stories to the concrete below. The bastards. If this all sounds a little dangerous, you'll apparently also be given the chance to wuss out and deliver pizzas like a complete jessie instead, and become the laughing stock of self-respecting gangsters the world-over. It'll be your choice.

However, you're probably impatiently drumming your fingers on the toilet rim by now waiting for me to tell you about the races. So I will. Once you're used to the controls (accelerate, break, pitch left/right, up and down) you're thrown into your

debut race. Sadly, though, the first thing that struck me was how slow the action is initially, despite the fact that precision is key as you zigzag up, down and through oncoming traffic (more than 1,000 cars onscreen at a time are promised on higher-spec machines) trying to gain an

"With 57 missions promised, you're bound to have the hang of it by the time you reach the final race"

advantage. Exotically named (but actually very basic) power ups do help the situation though. These include Photon Accelerators (speeds you up a bit) and centrifugal Force Modulators (makes steering easier). Although the preview version didn't allow access to some of the more advanced vehicles, the finished version promises to feature 30 vehicle types, and hopefully the more advanced ones will speed up the action considerably.

BREAK IT UP

Expect your cheating-git opponents to spend each race cutting corners, ducking down alleys and generally trying to push you into walls, as you battle the initially

cross-eye inducing 3D scenery in a desperate attempt to keep up. But with 57 missions promised, you're bound to have the hang of it by the time you reach the final race, which the developer Similis is promising will provide a grand finale.

Beam Breakers is threatening to be highly entertaining, melding both racing mayhem (if the later levels are faster than the early ones we've played that is) with manic delinquent thievery. A kind of floating *Crazy Taxi* if you will. Or even if you don't will. Still, we'll bring you the definitive review next issue, but in the meantime, have a squiz on this month's coverdisk(s) and get acquainted with the demo. Go on then, what are you waiting for? **EW**

BEAM WHAT?



What the bloody hell have futuristic hover-car racing and underworld crime movements got to do with cutting across a ray of light? It's absurd I tell you. Oh, what's that? Ah, right, apparently (so Similis would have us believe) in the far off future when we're all driving wheelless floaty things in the sky, instead of sticking to lanes in standard cars, we'll all be ushered around by an invisible system of pilot beams to keep us on course. Anyone brave or stupid enough to deviate from these set courses would not only be breaking the law, but would have to break away from their pilot 'beam', thus 'breaking' the 'beam' to do so. See what they've done there? Eh? Eh??! Clever huh? Oh forget it.



You can't park there mate, it's a double yellow beam.



Your opponent will employ all sorts of sneaky attacks to kill your general.

Sharpen your spears for MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

The sequel to the best RTS game ever? **Martin Korda** gets medieval

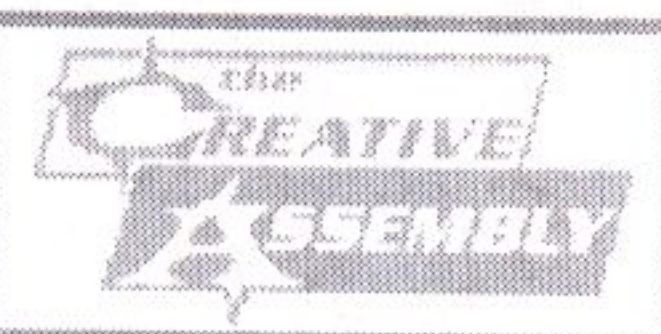
THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.totalwar.com
OUT August

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's the sequel to the best RTS ever
- 12 factions to play
- All new terrains and unit types
- Improved graphics
- I could spew superlatives all day

CV



CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

Now firmly established as the premier developer in the RTS genre, the boys at Creative Assembly have also had a go at making a rugby game.

2000 *Shogun: Total War*
Took the gaming world by storm by revolutionising the genre, moving it into full 3D and providing by far the biggest battles ever seen in a strategy game.

2001 *Shogun: The Mongol Invasion*
Excellent expansion pack for *Shogun* which allowed you to take on the role of the Mongols. Also came with many new features and a graphical overhaul.

2001 *Rugby 2001*
A fairly standard rugby sim, which was vaguely entertaining, but well below the standard of their previous two games.

AHHHH *Shogun*. Glorious *Shogun*. Delectable fusion of carnage and tactical subtlety, wrapped in glorious 3D and blessed with the AI of legends. It's what computer simulated war is all about. Forget all those irritants of building intricate networks of cottage industries and production lines in which wizened old women shuffle around with rocks strapped to their creaking backs, in an effort to fuel your burgeoning empire with a steady supply of granite. Forget it. I'm talking war here. And if it's war, I want blood, I want suffering, I want soldiers scrabbling in the dirt searching with blood-filled eyes for their severed index fingers, warriors cradling each other pathetically in a vain attempt to ease the pain of their comrade's final wheezed-out breaths. I want atmosphere which swells my heart so it's oozing out of my nose, battle-hardened cries stinging my ears like lashes from a bullwhip, and visuals so stunning that my eyeballs fall out from

disbelief. I want something like *Shogun*, only better. Basically, I want a sequel, and come August, I'm going to get one.

JOURNEY TO ANOTHER TIME

And so it was that on the twenty-fourth day of the month of March in the year 2002 of Our Lord, a group of intrepid travellers made their way to a sweaty artificially lit box known to locals as the *PC Zone* games room. Led by their leader, Michael de Plater, a man with an outstanding plumage of hair sprouting from his chin, they did bring with them the one true disk of war and proceeded to enlighten all who came with great stories of medieval combat. Which basically translates to Creative Assembly coming down a couple of weeks ago and showing me the latest code for *Medieval: Total War*. And while Michael and sidekick Ian Roxburgh (now where have I heard that name before?) ably presented the game, I grilled them for further information.

DISC PAGES

DISCS Matt Cheshire, Luke Walker and Alan Stonebridge

WORDS Rhianna Pratchett, Matt Cheshire, Richie Shoemaker and Martin Korda

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline on **08701 711 482**. The line is open weekdays between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, or email pc_zone@interchange.co.uk BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, soundcard, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- Have a pen and paper to hand, so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a P266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on the discs. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D accelerator only.

DISCLAIMER

- This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
- Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) that may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.

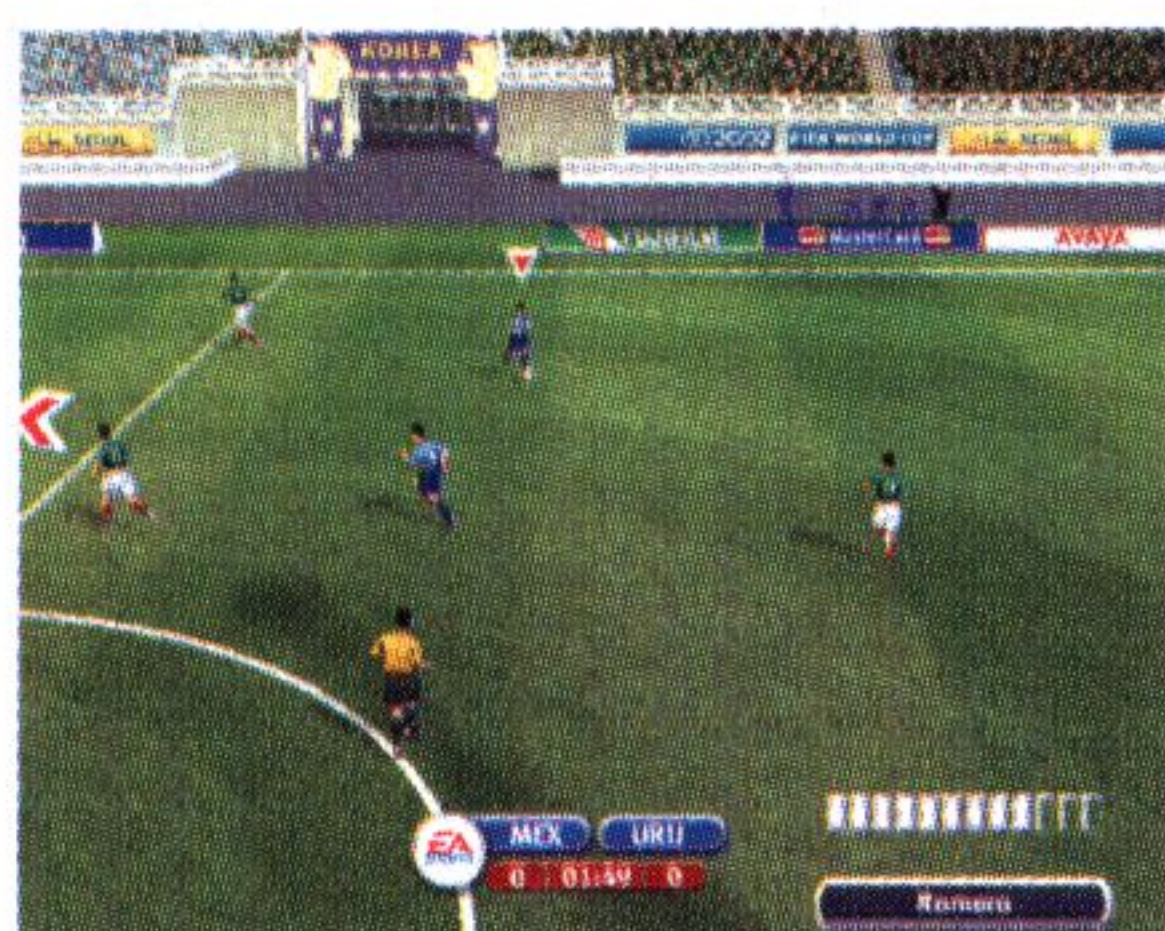
WORLD CUP SPECIAL

FIFA 2002 WORLD CUP

CD1/DVD Pub: EA Reviewed: Issue 116 (72%)

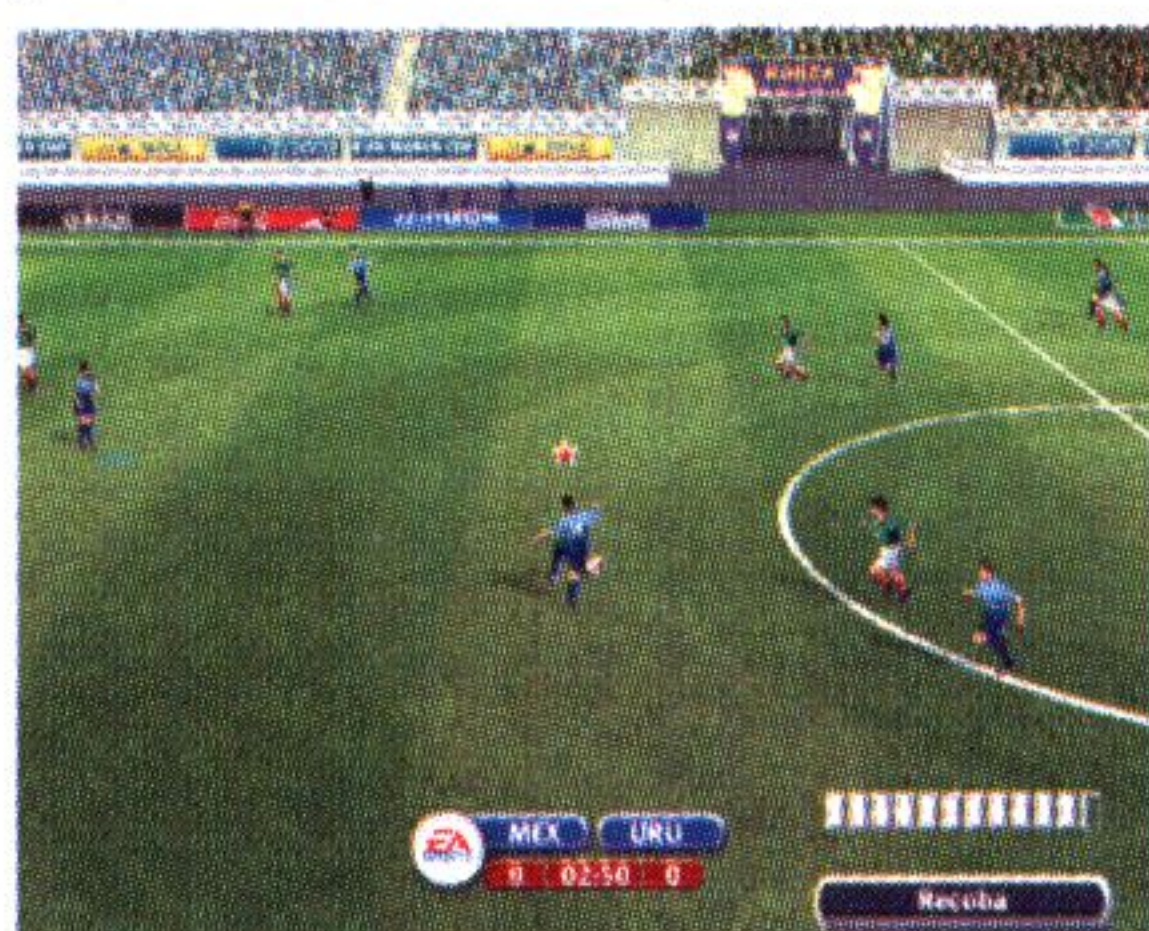
THE BEAUTIFUL GAME AND HOW TO PLAY IT

UNLIKE OLDER FIFA GAMES, THIS ONE ISN'T SUCH A DODDLE TO PLAY...



A corner is a great opportunity to go for goal.

1 You can't just tap the pass button and watch as the ball sails, uninterrupted, to the feet of your opponent. Identify the location of a player before attempting to pass and make sure you give the ball enough power to reach him. Be careful though, if you pass too hard the receiving player will lose control and possession.



Great balls of fire!

2 A star icon just above the head identifies your best player when he is in possession of the ball. He's your most valuable asset and can do things other players can't, like shoot with more power or pass more accurately. If you can get the ball to him in a forward position, it's worth going for a goal.



He fell over, ref, honest.

3 It's easy to get caught in possession so don't be tempted to dribble past everyone on the field, you need to pass if you want to go forward. And remember, free kicks and corners are easy ways of scoring once you've got the hang of them so use them wisely.



With the Japanese/Korean World Cup looming the smart money was on another FIFA and EA is never one to disappoint. Previous incarnations of the series have been criticised for the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it attitude', but the developers were obviously listening and introduced a few changes which we thought actually broke the last version. Unfortunately. Things are slightly better this time around and with World Cup fever breaking out across the country you could do a lot worse than having a hack at this exclusive demo that offers a full 45 minutes of South American rivals Uruguay and Mexico. You get to choose which team to play as, but that's pretty much all the thinking you need to do as EA has disabled all of the options screens for the demo.

KICK OFF 2002

CD1/DVD Pub: Acclaim Reviewed: Issue 115 (40%)



Andy Gray scribbles all over another footy highlight.

Back in the early '90s, *Kick Off 2* was the king of football games. OK, so maybe our 40 per cent review score last issue shows that abdication occurred sometime in the '80s but if you're a fan of nostalgia this will bring a smile to your face quicker than a pack of Werthers Originals. Nothing much has really changed, apart from the sharper graphics, and the control system



still takes some getting used to so persevere. The demo offers one half of a game from the Exhibition or Challenge modes, or you can practice your free kicks, penalties and the like in Practice mode. If you're after more help check out the read-me file for a full list of controls and advanced tips on how to play.

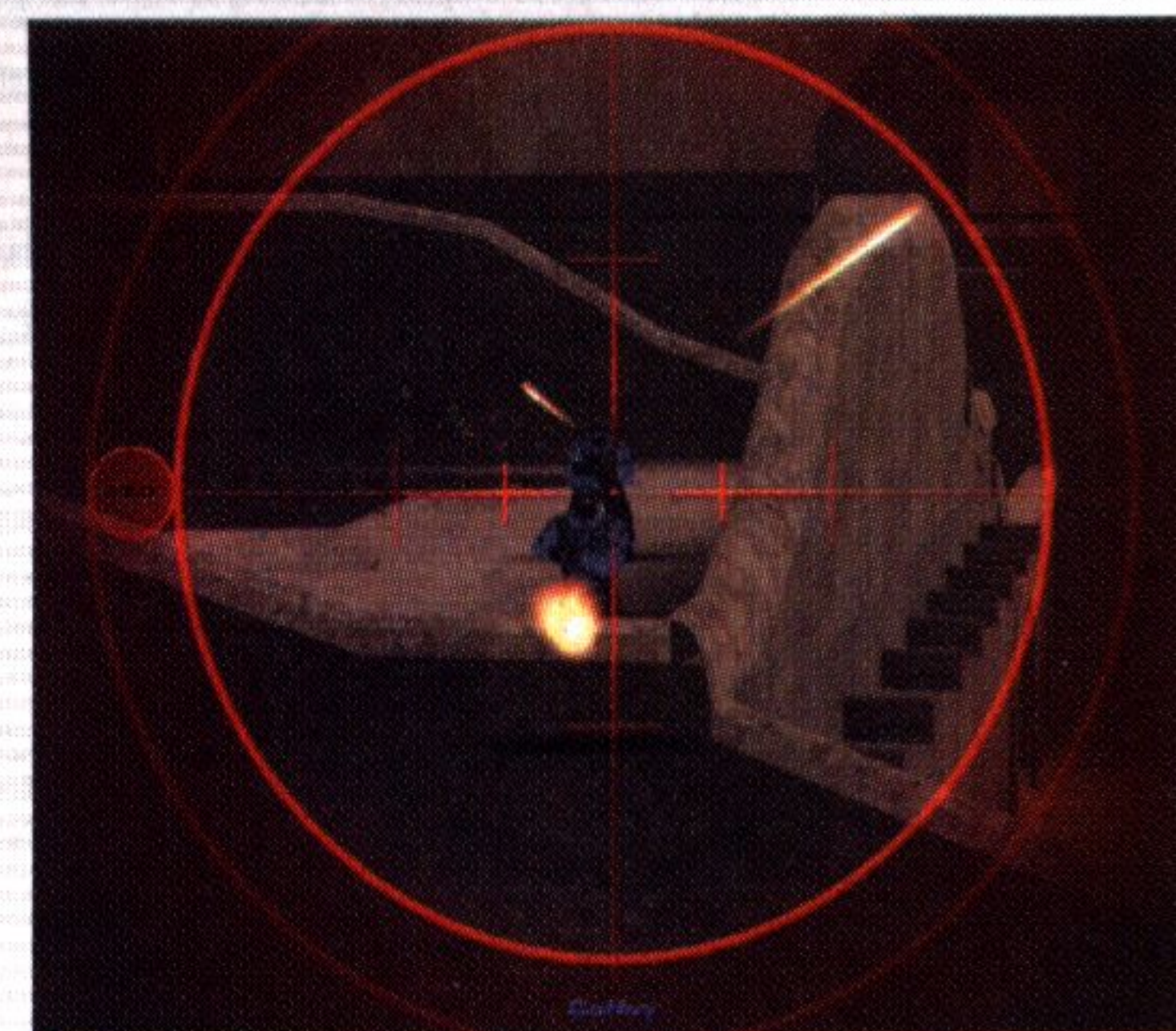
MOBILE FORCES

CD1/DVD Pub: Rage



Vehicles are great for causing maximum destruction.

First-person shooters are in abundance, so *Rage* needs to pull something special out of the bag if it is to make any kind of impact with *Mobile Forces*. The demo offers both single- and multiplayer (LAN only), but there is no support in the single-player mode. There's only one map, based on a wild west theme,



and the aim of the game is much like domination in *Unreal Tournament*, where you have to capture a specific point on the map and hold it for four minutes. You can play on either the red or blue team, and there are a number of hefty weapons, as well as vehicles, at your disposal.

and it's now far easier for us to put new features into the game, such as new scenarios and unit attributes. The other big thing we worked on was the display side." He zoomed in on a column of spearmen, revealing a level of detail never seen before in a *Total War* incarnation. "The textures and units are over four times as detailed as before, so we can now individually colour each of the men so that they stand out in battles more." He went on to show me a set of sprawling maps, at least double the size of anything we've seen before in the series. What's more, each one was packed with detail, with villages, dense forests and hedgerows dotting the lush surroundings.

Things were certainly looking impressive, but the key to any strategy game is, of course, the quality of its AI. Michael soon allayed any fears I may have had. "The individual soldiers' AI is much better. The more experienced they are the more likely they'll be to stay in formation. The tactical AI has been re-done too. As Michael explained, "In *Shogun*, there were three main AI battle plans where they'd either try to attack you head on, outflank you or run away. In *Medieval* there'll be close to a dozen, so the AI will now try to ambush you, feign retreats, encircle you or target your general. Hopefully the experience will be much more like playing a human opponent."

COMMANDING PRESENCE

A welcome addition to the interface now allows you to group army types together and issue a universal order. There was nothing more frustrating in *Shogun* than frantically clicking on each set of troops and cack-handedly sending them into battle at ten-second intervals because your fingers got stuck in the keyboard and you'd crippled your wrist by mowing over it with your mouse as you frantically

"The AI will now ambush you, feign retreats, encircle you or target your general. Hopefully it'll be much more like playing a human opponent"

MICHAEL DE PLATER
CREATIVE DIRECTOR,
CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

issued your commands. From what I saw, troops look far more intelligent, and to make matters even better, you're now given a reason for their level of morale (scared because he's just seen a spider, tired because he's stubbed his toe, running away because he needs the toilet kind of thing) rather than being given a vague description of your men's mood.

One major criticism of *Shogun* was the uniformity of the landscapes, which given that it was set in one country is, ultimately, forgivable. *Medieval*, however, will be very different. With 12 factions to play as and against, and battles stretching from England to Turkey, the diversity of not only the terrain but also the weather, will be extreme. Rain in England, sandstorms in Turkey. Mountains in central Europe, arid planes on the outskirts of Asia. Units will



Always remember the ships of the desert will get stuck in the snow.

enjoy advantages on their home terrain but suffer badly in climates they're unaccustomed to. Heavy German knights will slowly cook from the inside out in the desert, while camels won't fancy snow-capped mountains too much. As Michael demonstrated a desert battle between the camel riders and heavy cavalry, a sandstorm swept over the landscape, obscuring our view and choking our horses. Defeat (what we saw of it) was swift and clinical.

BAFTA for his score for *The Mongol Invasion*) raising the atmosphere still further, and a minimum spec of a mere PIII 350, *Medieval: Total War* is looking like another dead-cert winner for Creative Assembly. It's carnage, it's a never-ending onslaught of powers vying for political supremacy, it's filled to bursting point with a paralysing intensity that only a true war sim could ever come close to portraying. It's *Total War*, and I for one can't wait to play it. **EW**

WHEN TWELVE TRIBES COLLIDE

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO KILL TODAY?



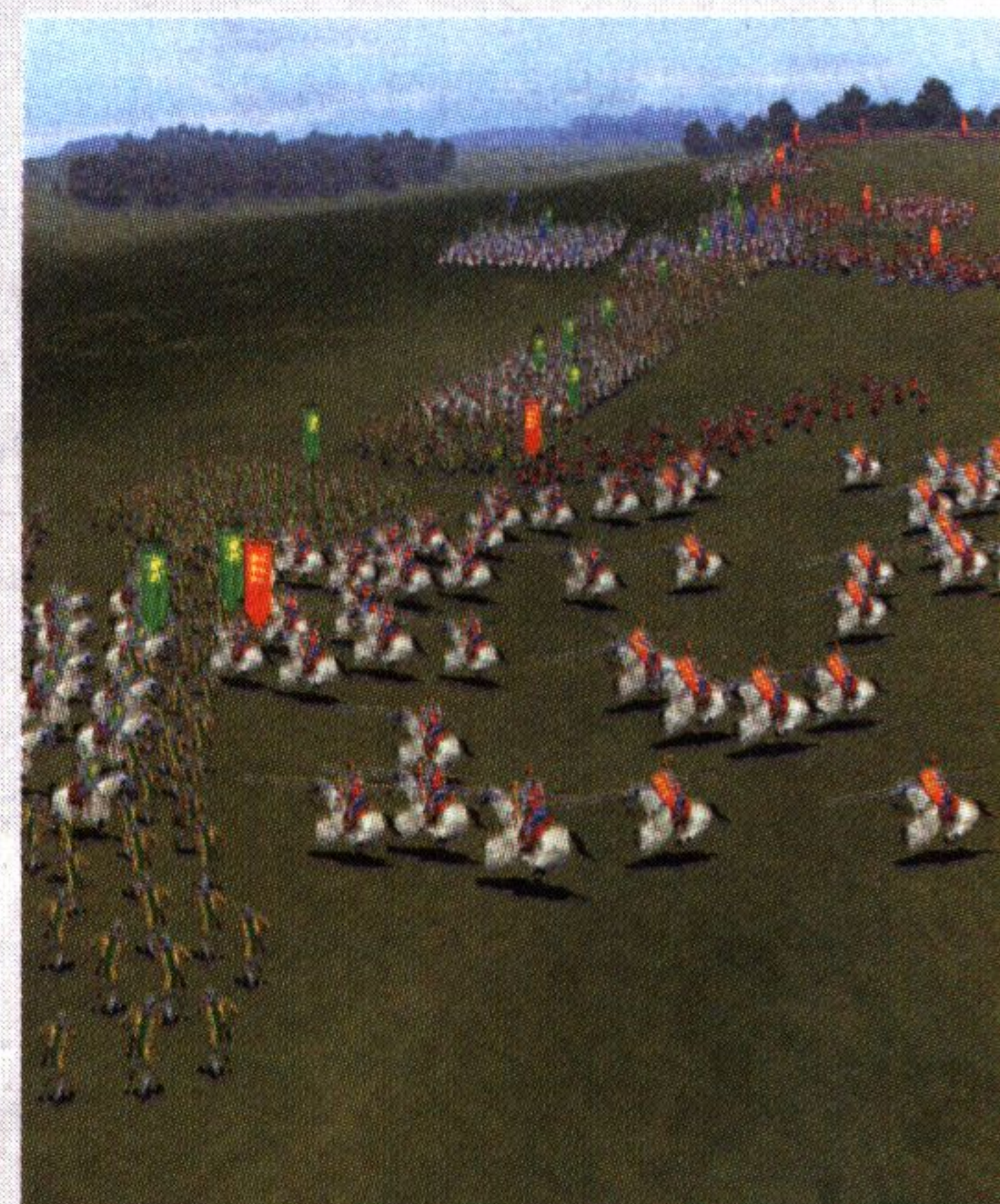
Creative Assembly is being a touch cagey about revealing too many details too soon about the 12 factions that will be in *Medieval: Total War*. What we do know is that the English, German, Byzantine, French, Italian and Turkish Empires will be on offer along with six as yet undisclosed factions, however, we'd be surprised if we didn't see the Mongols rear their all-conquering heads at some point. Obviously, each one will come with their own set of advantages, such as excellent missile-firing units for the English, hugely armoured knights for the Germans and fast mobile troops for the Turkish, and they'll all ship with their own victory conditions including suppressing the Scottish revolt for England and starting a Crusade as the Italians.

Other great features include playing as a historical hero such as Richard the Lionheart or Joan of Arc and taking part in historical conflicts such as The Hundred Year War and the Crusades.

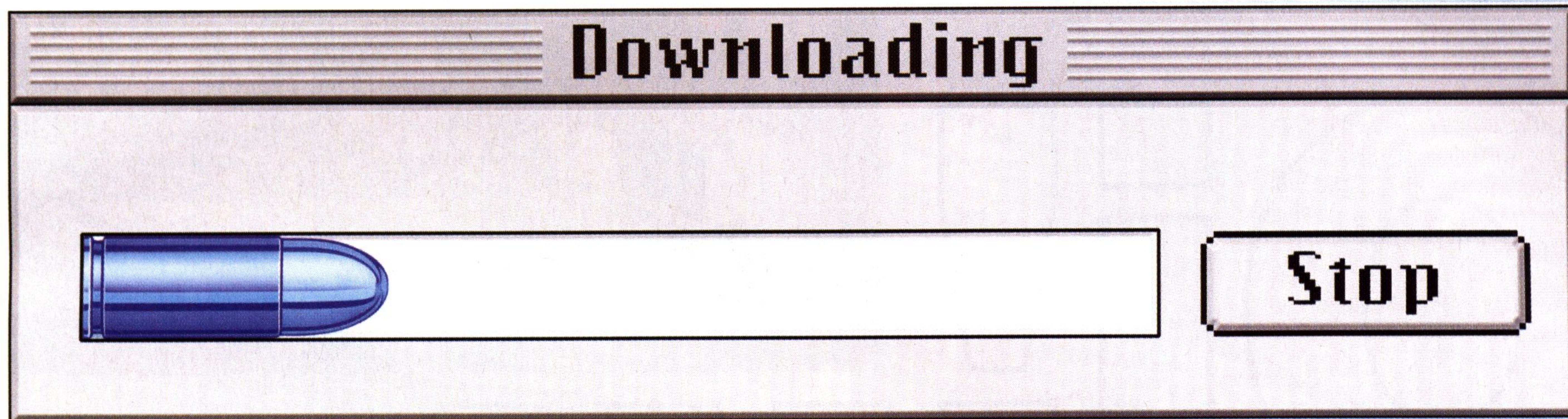
TOTAL SATISFACTION

Fundamentally, *Medieval: Total War* remains much the same as *Shogun*, in that it combines massive 3D action and endless bloodshed with a *Risk*-style strategy screen from which you conduct your troop movements and political and diplomatic dealings (which have also been through a major overhaul, allowing much more control and depth for both). "Those people who don't really like resource management will be able to automate it and concentrate on moving troops around the map and fighting battles," Michael pointed out as he finished his demonstration.

With an all-new rousing soundtrack from the brilliant Jeff van Dyck (who won a



Horses in skirts, whatever next?



Demand the Fasternet

From site to site like a shot, blueyonder Broadband Internet is nearly ten times faster than traditional 56k dial-up services. Connection is even faster - it's instant - because it's always on. And because it's connected by a separate cable, the phone line's always free. **To check local availability, call 0800 953 0736 or go to www.blueyonder.co.uk/info** Dial-up? Time's up. Demand the Fasternet.

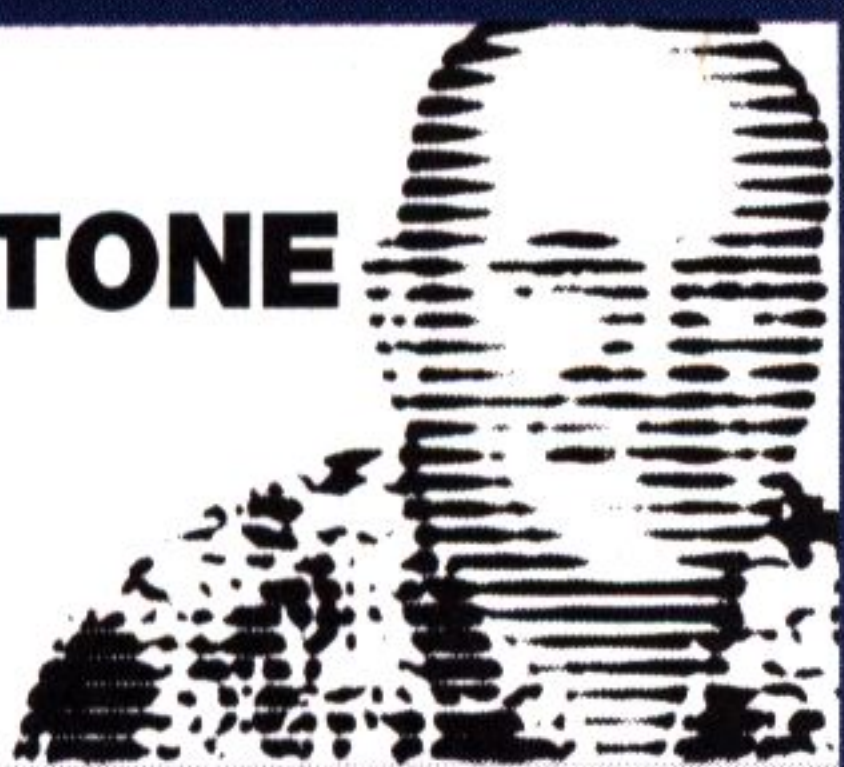
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Broadband Internet



£50 installation applies (£75 if Desktop NIC required). Customers are required to commit to a minimum 12-month service period at £29.99 per month (or £25 with any other Telewest service). See www.blueyonder.co.uk for Full terms and conditions of blueyonder service.

PROFILE

IAN LIVINGSTONE

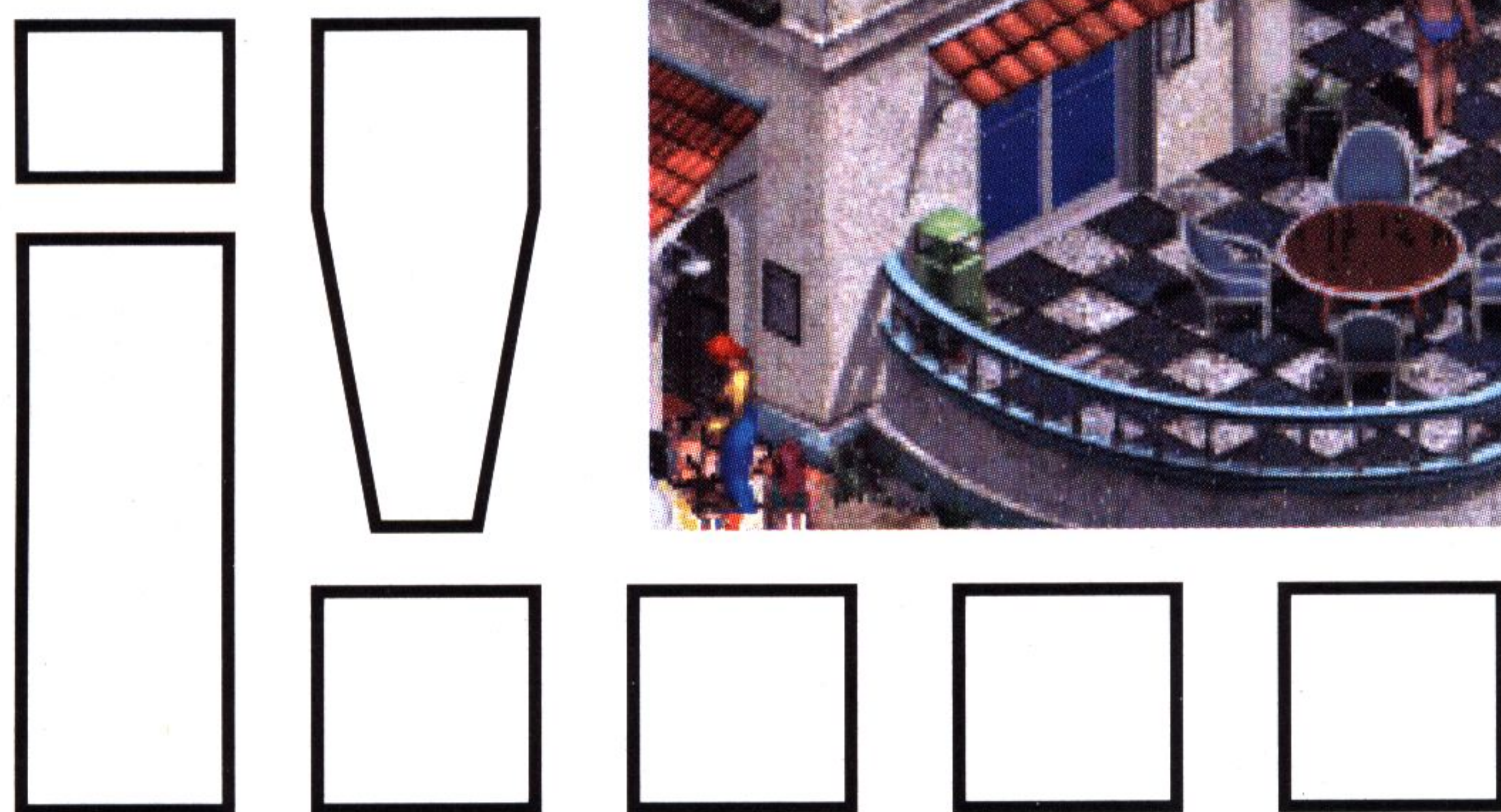
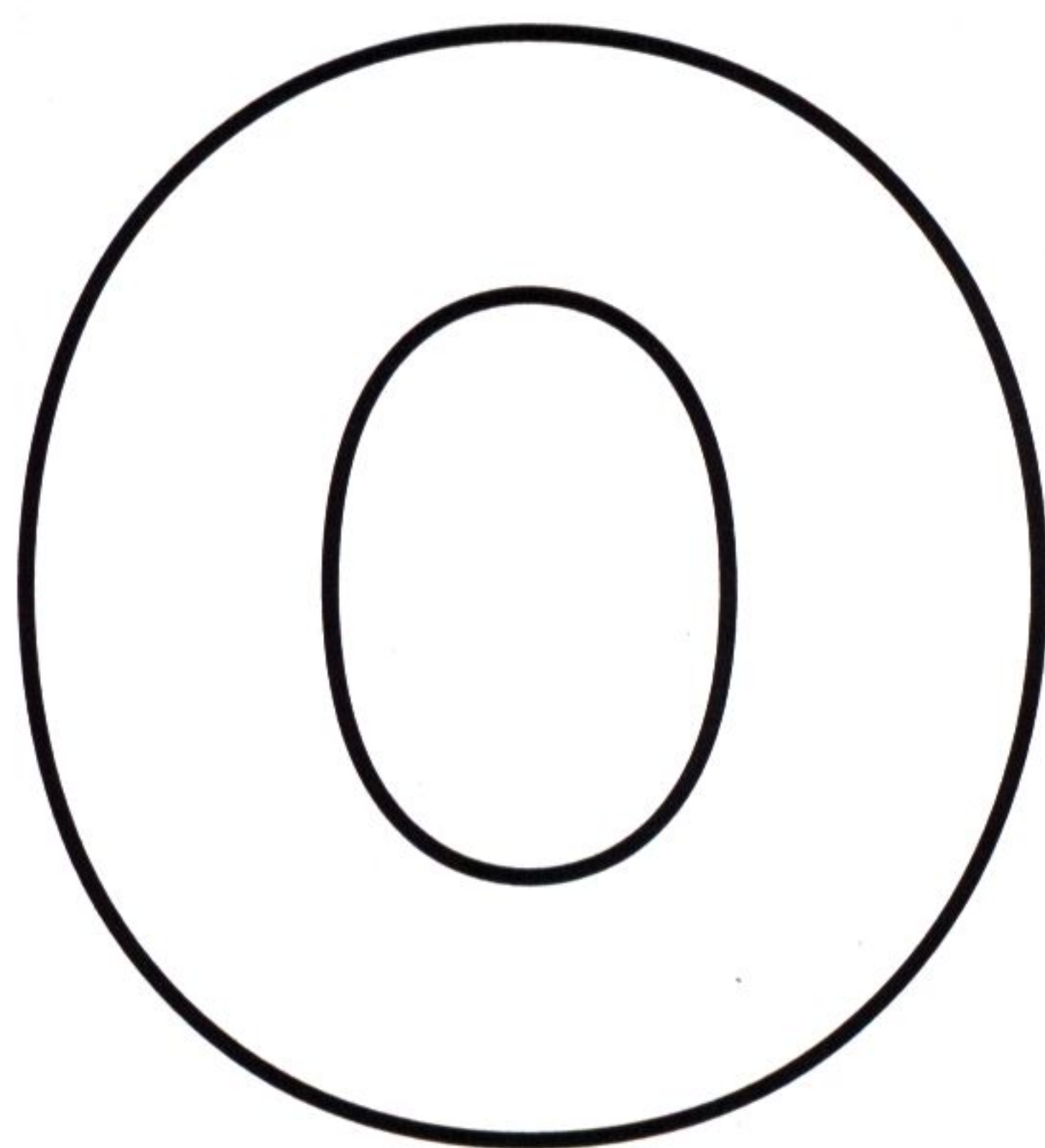


PUBLISHER: Eidos Interactive

POSITION: Executive Chairman

FAVOURITE GAME: *Champ Manager*

FIRST GAME YOU EVER PLAYED:

Utopia on the Intellivision console

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Deep Red

PUBLISHER Eidos

WEBSITE www.eidosinteractive.co.uk

OUT Summer

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's the brainchild of Eidos boss Ian Livingstone
- Graphic displays of penetrative sexual intercourse
- Copious amounts of serious drinking
- Men punching each other hard in the face

CV

EIDOS

IAN LIVINGSTONE

He used to live in a van, now he runs Eidos. Here's how he got there

1977 Opened Games Workshop's first retail shop, with Steve Jackson.

1982 Co-wrote *Fighting Fantasy* debut, *The Warlock Of Firetop Mountain*.

1991 Sold Games Workshop, which now has a turnover of £92 million.

1992 Took a year off, during which he wrote two books.

1993 Invested in Domark, a computer games company.

1995 Domark acquired by Eidos, making Livingstone a significant shareholder.

1998 *Deathtrap Dungeon*, Livingstone's pet project, is released.

2001 Thinks up *Beach Life*, allegedly while holidaying in Cancun.

LIVINGSTONE, what's your game?

BEACH LIFE

Eidos boss Ian Livingstone is a busy man, but he still has time to think of new game ideas. Steve Hill spoke to him about this, and much, much more

IAN LIVINGSTONE has been at the forefront of the games industry since before there was a games industry. As founders of the Games Workshop in the 1970s, he and partner Steve Jackson went on to become best-selling authors with the phenomenally successful *Fighting Fantasy* books, whereby callow youths lived out elaborate adventures at the whim of a dice. An avid

Manchester City fan, Livingstone is currently executive chairman of Eidos and recently came up with the concept for *Beach Life*, a kind of virtual version of *Club Reps* or *Ibiza Uncovered*. Sporting an absurd beach shirt, he told us why.

PCZ Let's start with *Beach Life* (because we've got to). Were you actively involved in the design?

IAN It was my idea. I spend a lot of time thinking about game ideas and the criteria we have at Eidos, being a global publisher, is that it has to have universal appeal and it's pretty obvious everybody goes on holiday. When I try and come up with a game idea I want to be able to tap into people's life experiences or dreams. These days, there's so much competition for people's time you've got to be able to trigger an emotion immediately. I think you have to describe a game in ten words or forget it.

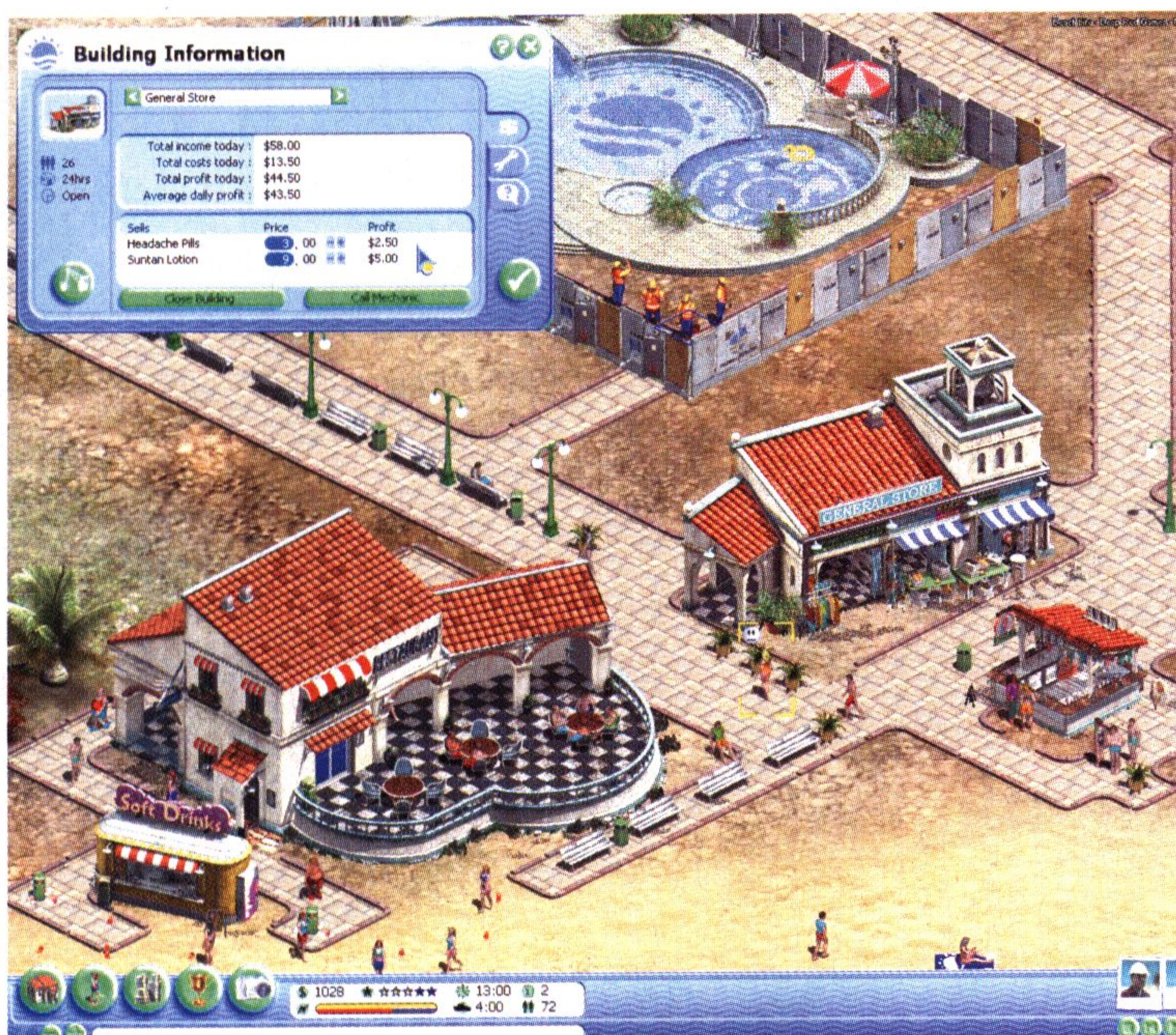
PCZ What ten words would you choose for this?

IAN This is a game about behaving badly on holiday.

PCZ That's nine, not bad. Is this the first game you've actually designed since *Deathtrap Dungeon*?

IAN Well, *Deathtrap Dungeon* was partly my design. I also had other people helping me with that one a lot and it actually went away from the original design of a true role-playing game and ended up being more of a 3D action fighting game. It was very successful, but I felt a little bit disappointed myself in letting it go in the direction it ended up going.





Not an England shirt in sight, how odd.

“This is a game about behaving badly on holidays”

PCZ So you're keeping a closer eye on *Beach Life*. How do you balance that with being executive chairman of Eidos.

IAN It is a large company and my real skill and real role within Eidos is trying to come up with new ideas. I have a lot of experience – obviously with the Games Workshop and the *Fighting Fantasy* game books – of creating stuff that people want to play. So I'd say my role is sticking my finger in everybody else's pie. It's like being a wise old man and steering the ship in a particular way.

PCZ Eidos is probably the most high profile British company, and news of share fluctuations and so forth are always reported with particular relish.

IAN Well, it has been a bit of a rollercoaster ride. Initially, Lara Croft was responsible for its immediate visibility. You can't get away from the fact that we sold more than 25 million copies of *Tomb Raider* and its various iterations. It is impossible to deny the publicity that accrued from that. We didn't court publicity, we were just thrust into the limelight because of the spectacular success. It was an amazing success and Eidos is still a very successful company and still a FTSE-250 company. We're not messing around. But you've always got this attitude to British success: they like it to a certain point and then they don't like it any more. So when there was a global downturn in software sales as a result of the demise of the PlayStation 1 in anticipation of the PlayStation 2, people in the UK saw it as an Eidos-only problem, which was not the case. Every software company around the world was hit, it's just a normal part of the cycle of transition from one hardware platform to another.

PCZ To the man in the street, selling 25 million games would suggest you'd be in massive profit forever, but it doesn't work that way...

IAN It doesn't. Games are very expensive to produce. We spend more than £50 million a year making various games, not all of which come to market. And it costs more and more each year. In the old days, two blokes in a garage could make a game for a couple of thousand quid. Now you're talking budgets of one, two, perhaps three million pounds, so you've got to take a closer look before you allocate scarce resources in a market that is still unknown today. Especially with three console platforms battling each other out, and the PC platform competing with itself in terms of time and with people spending time on the Internet as opposed to playing games. So you've got to be very particular about what games you make.

PCZ You instigated the Man City sponsorship. What is the benefit of people going to Maine Road and seeing Eidos on Shaun Goater's shirt? Do you think the entire crowd know what Eidos is?

IAN They do now. If you look at it in terms of the cost it's been a massive benefit to us because when I did that deal with Manchester City they were languishing in the Second Division, therefore the deal was not expensive. Nothing comparable to what you would pay in the Premiership, so pound for pound spent it was very, very cheap. There's obviously a strong argument that now we've established awareness we've got to translate that brand awareness into product awareness, therefore we might not be renewing some of our sponsorships, but at least people know the name Eidos.

to be particularly successful. So there are more strings to our bow, so to speak.

PCZ What did you think of *Tomb Raider*, the film? Honestly.

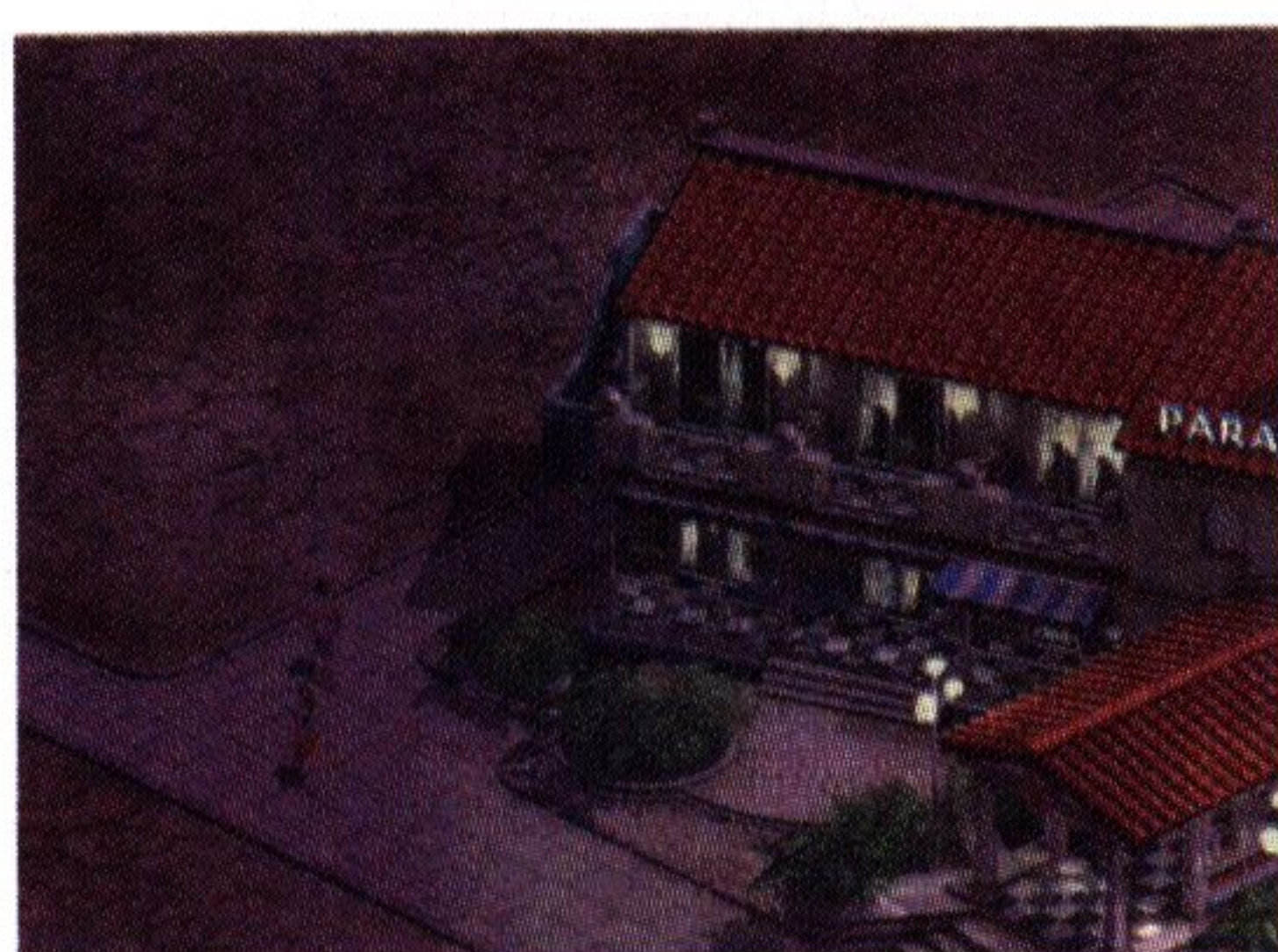
IAN I thought she was fantastic, Angelina Jolie. You could not have picked a better actress to play that part. Not only did she look the part, she played the part, and I think she's a very good actress and she made a huge effort to do as much of the stuff herself without complaining. I went down to Pinewood a few times to watch it being filmed and met her a couple of times. She was just phenomenal. I mean that genuinely, she really did try to do it right. I thought the amount spent was a lot, more than US\$90 million. The sets were good and the special effects were good. The story wasn't the best, to be honest, but as a movie experience I thought it was very good and certainly a lot better than any other game characters that have been put on to the silver screen.

PCZ *Championship Manager 01/02* recently became the biggest selling PC game in history. Were you involved in the initial signing of that?

IAN *Championship Manager*? Yes, I've been involved in *Champ Man* since 1993, since the Domark days. It's the game I play incessantly on the PC, it's a game close to my heart.

PCZ So when the young Collyer brothers came down, did you have any idea what they had? Was it a big gamble?

IAN It wasn't a huge gamble. Being a



It's hardly Manumission.

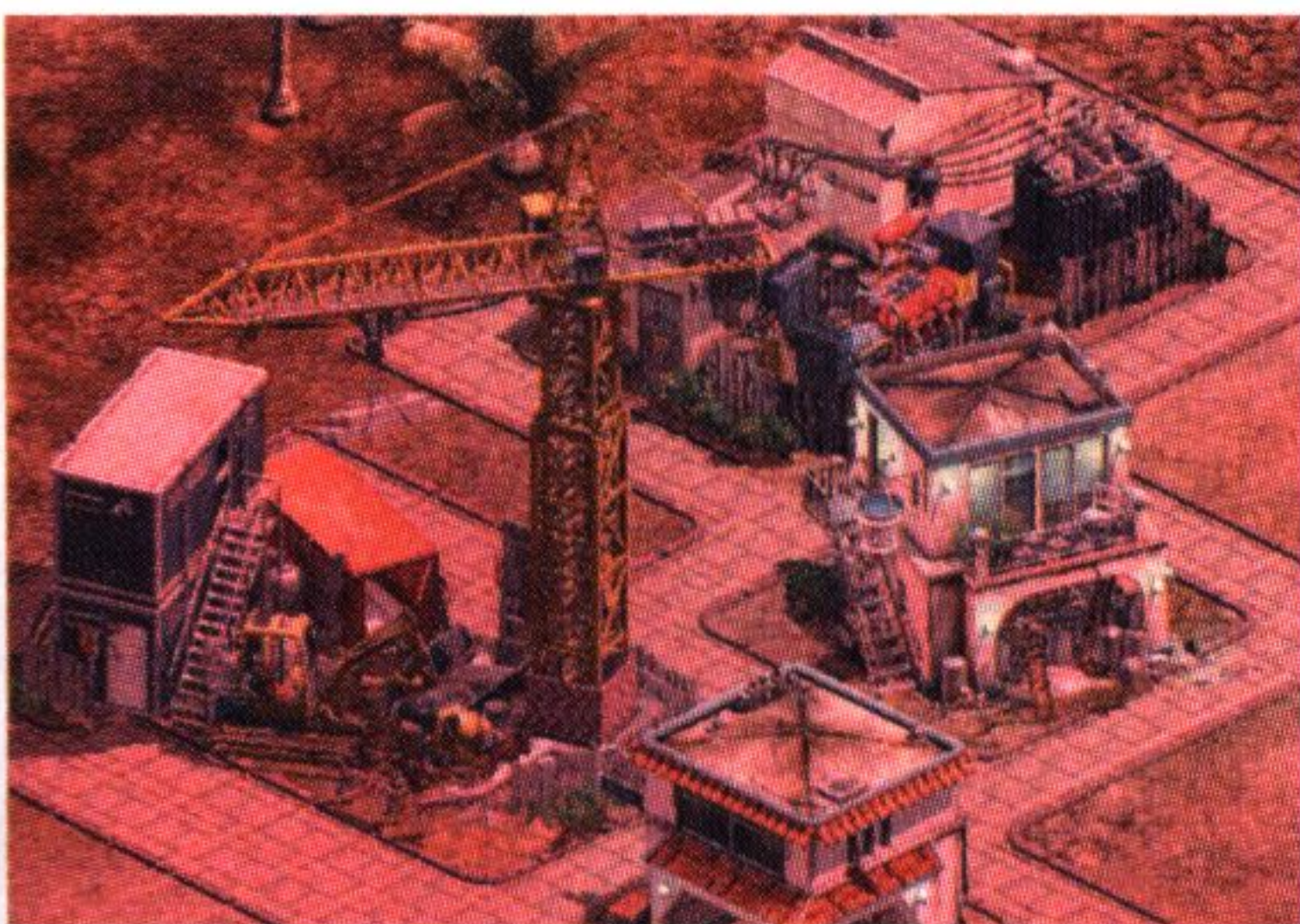


We're hoping the game is slightly better quality than Ian's shirt.

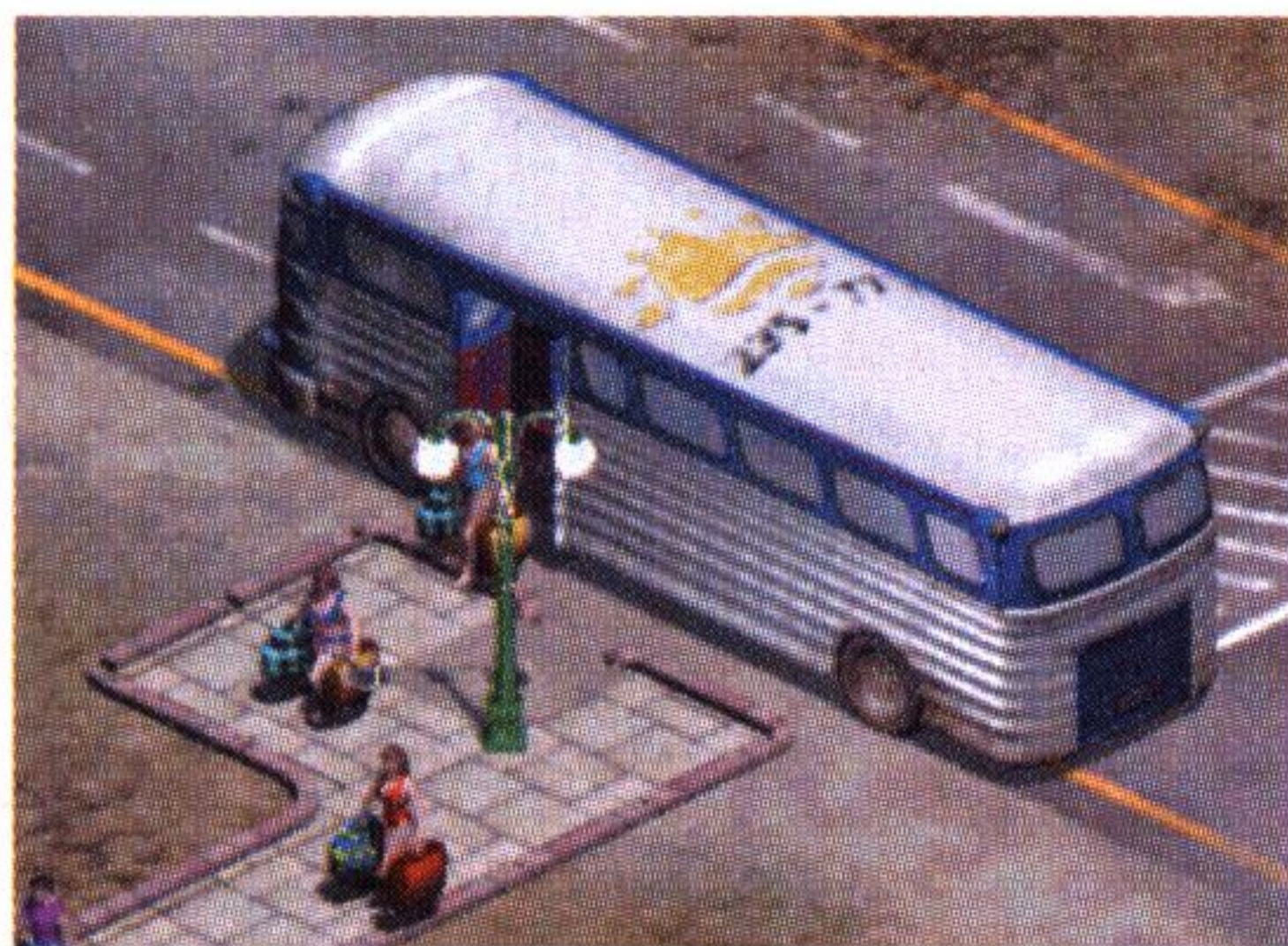
PCZ Do you still get accused of being a one-trick pony because of the Lara Croft thing, or have people moved on from that?

IAN I think we've got lots of brands now that are doing well. Five years ago we only had one significant brand, but now we've got *Commandos*, we've got *Timesplitters*, *Champ Man*, *Soul Reaver*, *Deus Ex*, the new one, *Praetorians* from Pyro, I think is going

mature gamer, even in '93, I always liked simulations. I knew there was a market for this type of game and I knew about *Rotisserie Baseball* in the States [a fantasy league thing]. Plus, the Collyers were absolutely determined to make it as realistic as possible and they would turn down opportunities to do it on different formats just so they could maintain the integrity of the product. And the fact that they were linked into all these supporter



Tourists want decent transport facilities.



sites and fanzines, and now they've got this massive pyramid of fan bases all supplying information and making it as realistic as possible. And it pays off. At the end of the day, quality will always survive and everything else will fall by the wayside and that is an absolute quality product.

PCZ Have you ever considered helping them with the Man City stats?

IAN Yes! Oh yeah, I've tweaked a few of the City stats when they've had 'em wrong. Don't you worry, yeah... I remember when they got Nicky Weaver wrong, they didn't know who he was and they rated him really badly. I said, 'He's a great goalkeeper, tweak him.'

PCZ It was recently revealed that the games industry in Britain was worth £1.6 billion. Is it genuinely mainstream entertainment now?

IAN Worldwide, the industry is US\$17 billion which is the second largest entertainment industry in the world, but it's always treated as a sort of gimmick, like hula-hoops – here today, gone tomorrow. Whenever there's a downturn in the market as a transition between one hardware platform to the next, they say it's all over, but each time it comes out, the next iteration of hardware outsells all the previous ones added together. The closer you can get to television broadcast quality, the more the mass market is drawn into that. It's no longer the domain of so-called geeks or anoraks because it's not just abstract pixels moving along the screen. You've got recognisable characters and faces, therefore you're no longer a nerd. Sony has made gaming cool, with music and fashion, as a lifestyle experience.

PCZ But some people do still look on it as a geeky hobby.

IAN That's a stereotype left over from when they first heard about it. In the '70s when I used to say I was in games, just launching a game called *Dungeons & Dragons*, people wanted to lock me up as if I was some sort of a freak. Now you don't have to be embarrassed about saying you're in the games industry because everyone's heard of people like Lara Croft, and the movie has made that credible, so she's a credible character and now we're becoming a more credible industry. It's getting a bit of sex, like music and film. The only thing it lacks is perhaps its heroes. With pop stars and film stars, you have these heroes that you see on TV all the time. Film and music have definitely got some sex about them, whereas with games, the heroes don't exist.

PCZ Although you kind of tried to do that with Jon Romero's *Daikatana*, which obviously went fairly wrong. How do you feel about the whole Ion Storm debacle?

IAN It was a huge learning experience for us. We thought Romero was going to do what he did with *Doom*. It was expensive, but we have ended up with *Deus Ex* and Warren Spector.

PCZ But they were trying to promote themselves as heroes of the industry, Jon Romero with his long hair and his sports cars, and it all ended up backfiring.

IAN You can only do that if you deliver.

PCZ It's a big year for gaming with lots of consoles being released. Where do you think the PC is going to sit in all of this? Do you think the PC is always going to survive as a gaming platform?

IAN I think it always will survive, yeah. I like my mouse. And developers naturally want to program on it.

PCZ Will Eidos continue to support the PC?

IAN Yeah, definitely. I think we're going to have a very strong PC line-up this year. Hopefully *Beach Life*, definitely *Championship Manager 4*, definitely *Praetorians*, definitely *Republic*, another *Commandos* being developed now, we're not ignoring the PC at all. *Deus Ex 2*...

PCZ You recently turned 50. Do you still play games? What type of games?

IAN Yeah. I will play *Champ Man*, and on console I've been playing *Grand Theft Auto III*. But I do still play a lot of board games. I have more than 500. I've been running this thing called the games night club since 1986. It's held at my home and the members are Steve Jackson from Games Workshop – my old partner –

Peter Molyneux's in it, Clive Roberts [from *Beach Life* developer, Deep Red], and two others who aren't in the industry. It's a very tongue in cheek gentleman's club, really sending ourselves up, I do a newsletter at the end of each session to keep a record of points scored for each game played. At the end of the year we've got this little trophy. It's taking the piss out of gentleman's clubs, and we meet about every ten days.

PCZ Games have been around for a while. Do you think there are still some genuinely new ideas to come, entire new genres even?

IAN There will be. I wish I could think of them today because if you look back in history you always think 'well that's it,' and then inevitably something comes along. Look at board games, there's always been milestones, whether it's Monopoly, Scrabble, games like Trivial Pursuit, Dungeons & Dragons, they've all been new and totally original in their time and attracted massive sales and support. And similarly new ideas will come along in computer games, it's just a question of who is it. And do I want to publish it. **PCZ**



Sun, sex, sex and sand, all that's missing is the cerveza – BYO perhaps.

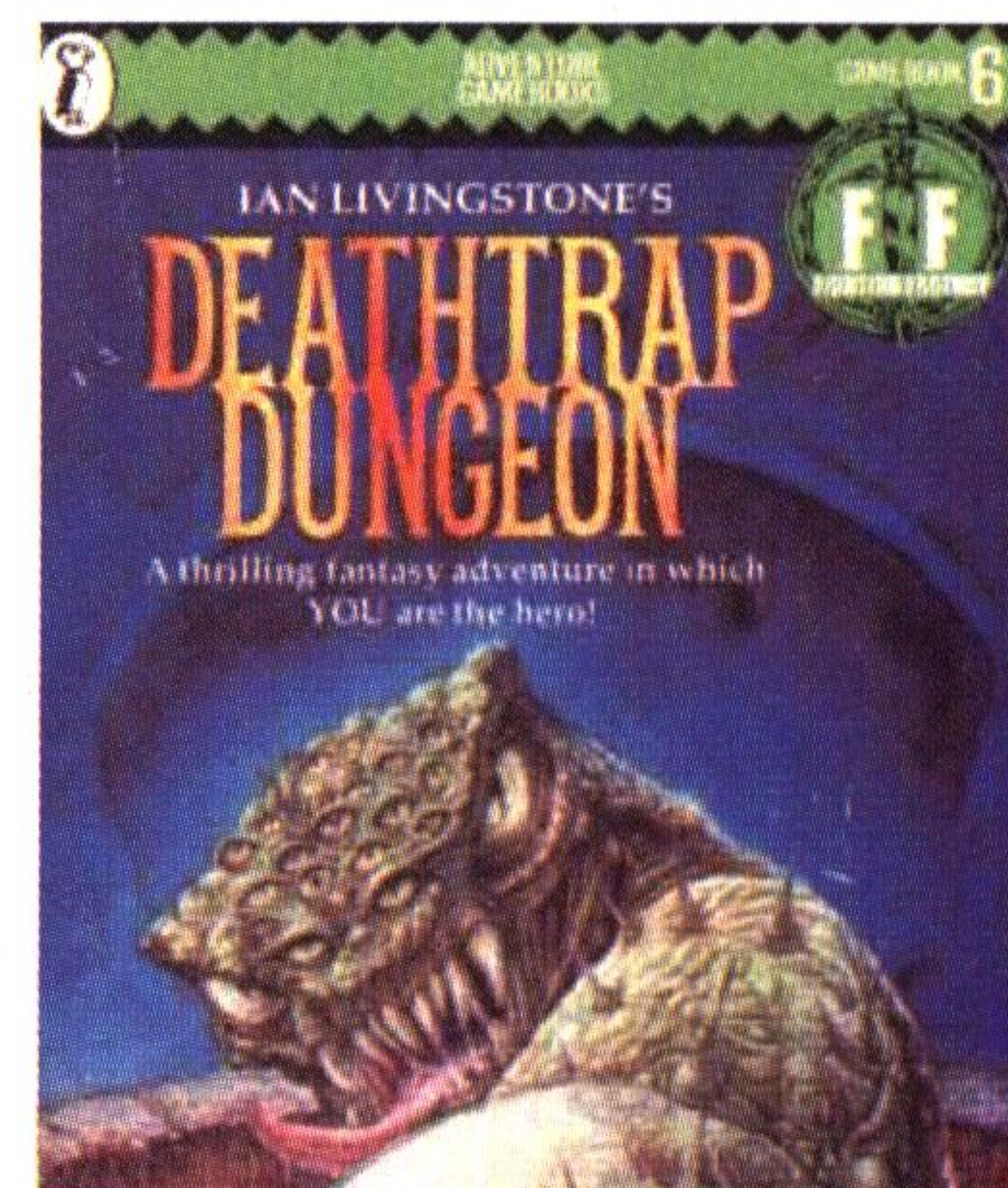
THE DICE MAN

IT WAS 20 YEARS AGO TODAY...

In 1982, Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson wrote a book called *The Warlock Of Firetop Mountain*. However, rather than simply peruse it from cover to cover in the traditional manner, readers were faced with choices that were decided with the roll of a dice, making it arguably the world's first interactive book. After rejection from one publisher (d'oh!), Penguin eventually agreed a cautious print run of 20,000 copies. The *Pokémon* of its day, word of mouth spread round the playground like wildfire, and it was reprinted ten times in the next eight weeks. At their peak Ian and Steve

churned out a new role-playing book every two months, garnering average sales figures of 400,000.

Two decades on, with the world going mad for *The Lord Of The Rings* and *Harry Potter*, the books are now being re-released by the opportunely named, Wizard Books, a division of Icon Books. Clearly, it's a very different world that they are being re-introduced into, but as Livingstone says: "It's no gamble for me, we don't have any great hopes today, but then we didn't 20 years ago and suddenly from selling a couple of thousand we went on to sell 14 million copies, so you never know."



*Snatched from prison by the Emperor's decree,
you arrive at the port of Seyda Neen with
nothing but the name of a contact in Balmora
and completely ignorant of the Prophecies of the
Incarnate, your mission, and the role you are to
play in the Morrowind's history.*

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*The enormous game world is open and free for you to discover. Go
anywhere you want and do anything you want.*

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#1 Xbox Game of E3
- Gamesmania



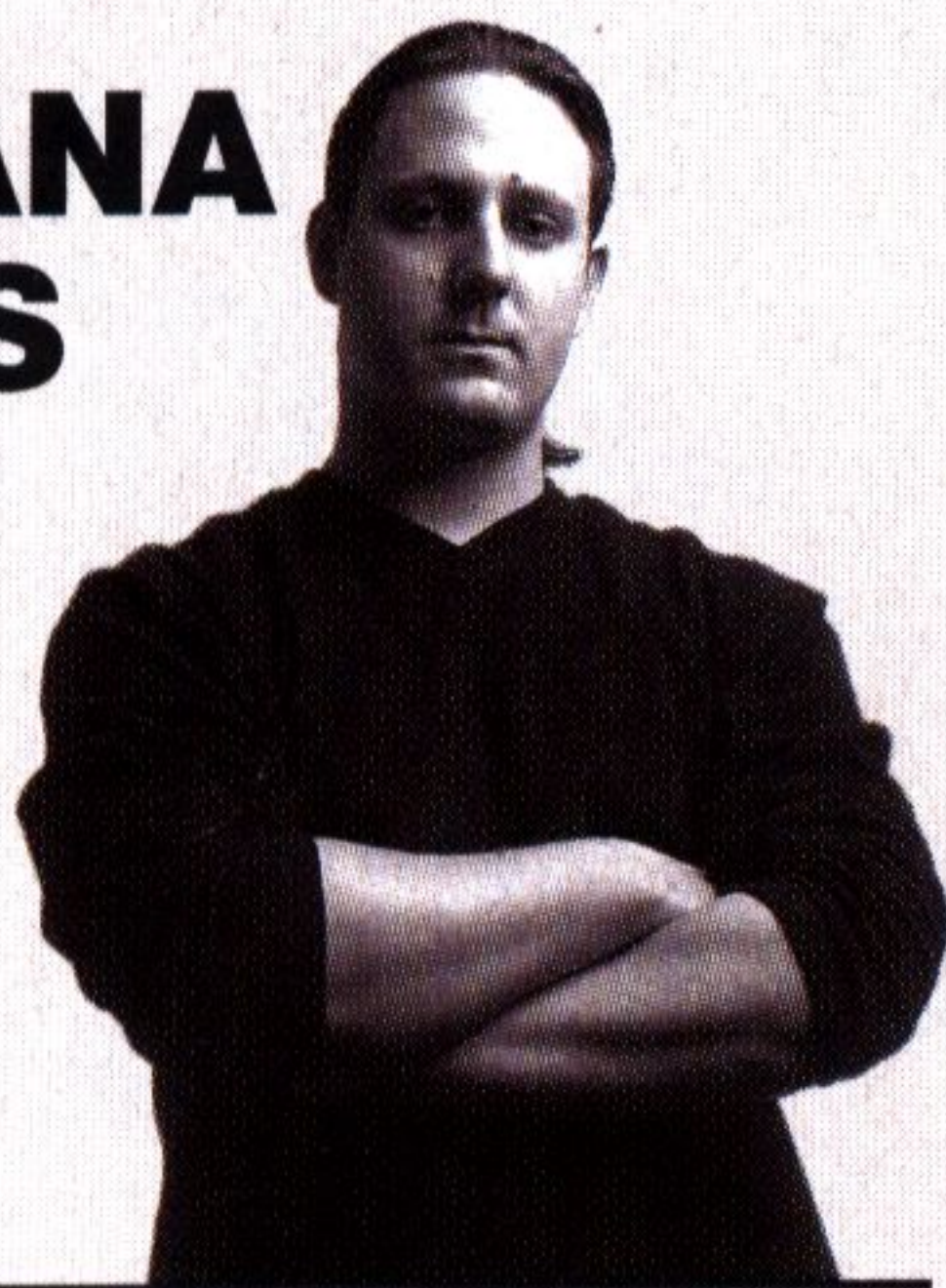
Finalist, Best RPG of Show
- Official E3 Awards



Elder Scrolls Series
Hall of Fame

REVIEWS

BANANA SKINS



■ **REVIEWS EDITOR** Martin Korda

▲ OK, now I know I've said this before, but I'm going to say it again: this industry is notorious for slippages. There, I've said it. Again. Sorry. But it's true. Games have been dropping out of my last few monthly 'For Review' lists, faster than a Fat Club contestant lured out of a cross-country race with a pork pie. Extensive bug-testing is the new in-vogue excuse as to why so many titles have failed to hit when they were meant to. It'll be interesting to see how many of them emerge from these extended bug-fixing sessions as highly polished and glitch-free specimens. Call me cynical, but I'll bet my hair they'll all be bugged to f*** anyway.

Culprits this month include the much-anticipated *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*, which has now slid down the timeline to August; *Hit Man 2*, which is being promised for October (and from what Paul Presley saw of the latest code this is definitely a good thing) and *Mafia*, which has slipped about another two months. Still at least there's the PC ZONE exclusive *Grand Theft Auto III* review to look forward to next issue. Hopefully.

All this has, of course, left me with the problem of filling the review section with a series of add-on packs. Five to be precise. They range from the stunning *Ghost Recon: Desert Siege* to the poorly cobbled-together *IL-2: Eastern Thunder*. But it's not all bleakness and expansion-pack cash-ins. *The Italian Job* will give all you hopeless nostalgics and Michael Caine superfans the chance to relive some of the scenes from the cult film, including the bits with Benny Hill. And for those of you who haven't been selected for the national squad to go to Japan for the World Cup, you can still have a go at winning the tournament with the latest *FIFA* game, proving some games can, thankfully, stay on schedule. Lets hope more follow suit.



Racing Minis and stealing gold is the name of the game in *The Italian Job*.



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THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly game publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic. Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

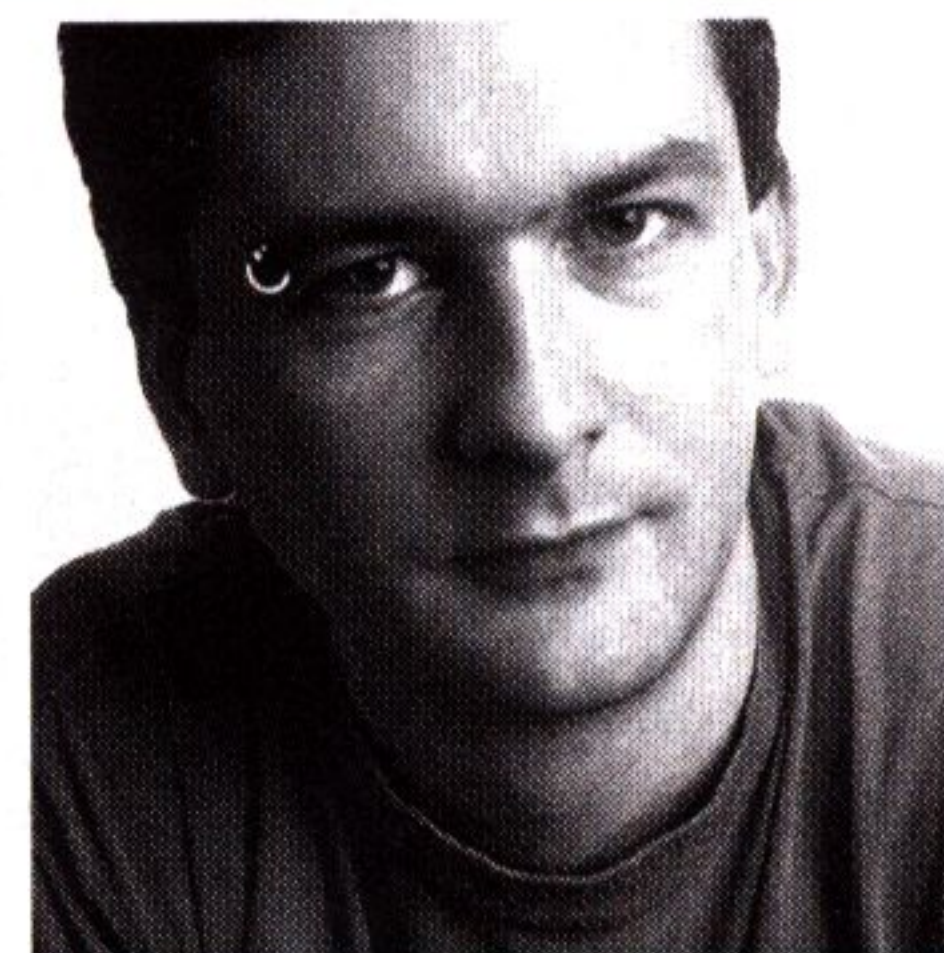
We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets reviewed by the right person, which means that you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA 2003*. We know that occasionally

you might disagree with us but we're big enough to take criticism. You can email your thoughts to letters@pczone.co.uk, or get them off your chest instantly on the forums at www.pczone.co.uk. If you think you can do better then why not send us a review – if it's good enough we'll print it in the magazine.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

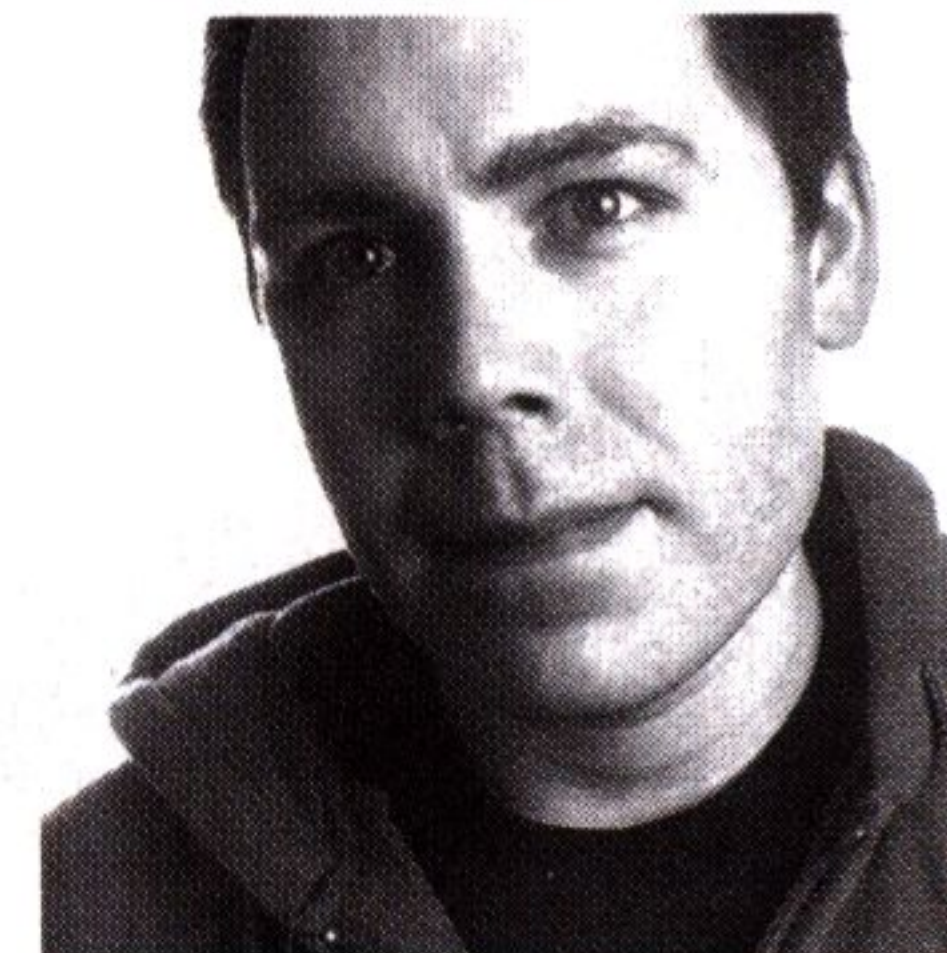
We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print we won't second guess how the game's going to play online. Instead you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly – as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.

MEET THE TEAM



DAVE WOODS

Ghost Recon: Desert Siege



RICHIE SHOEMAKER

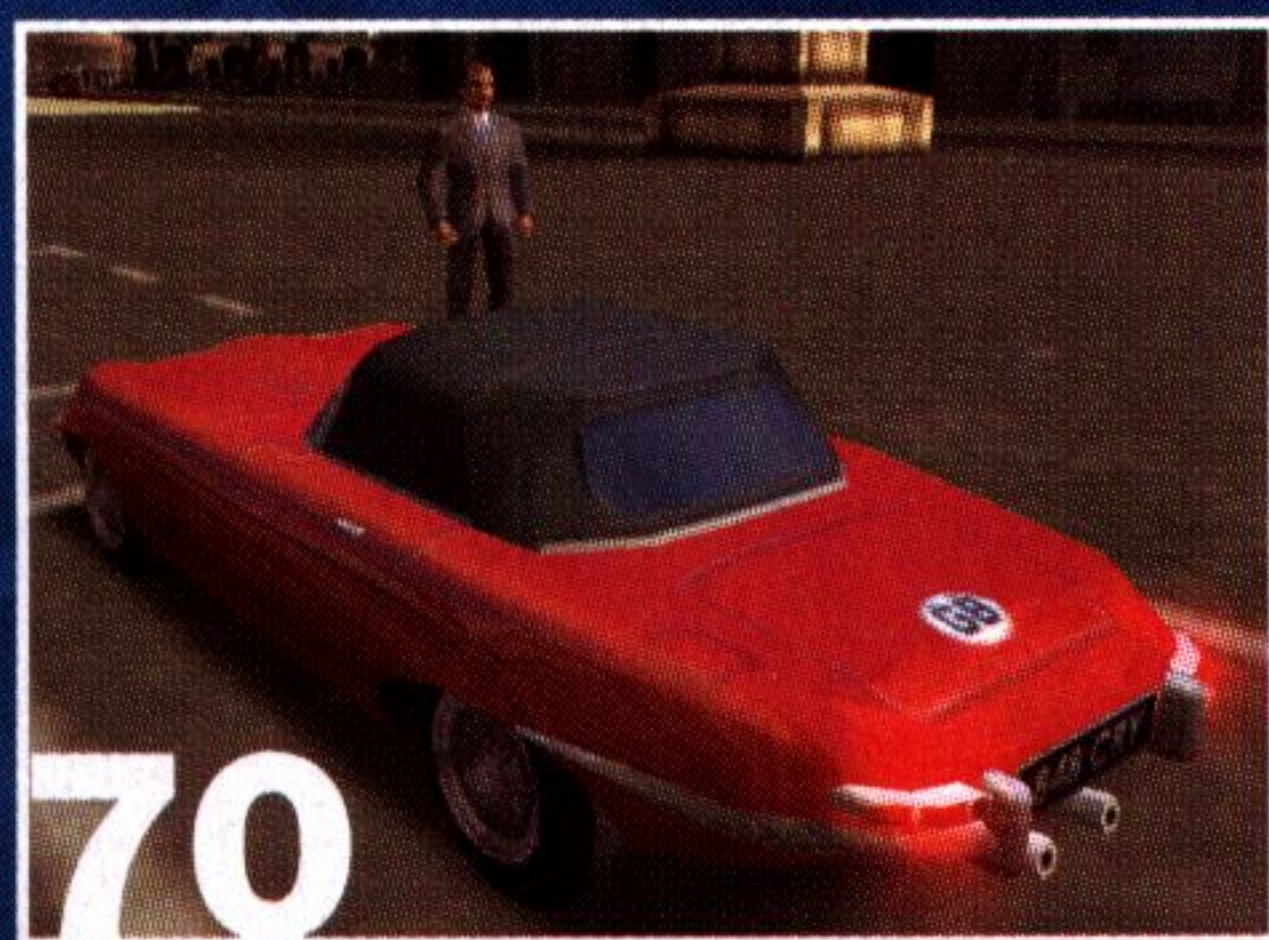
Jedi Knight II

What are you playing?

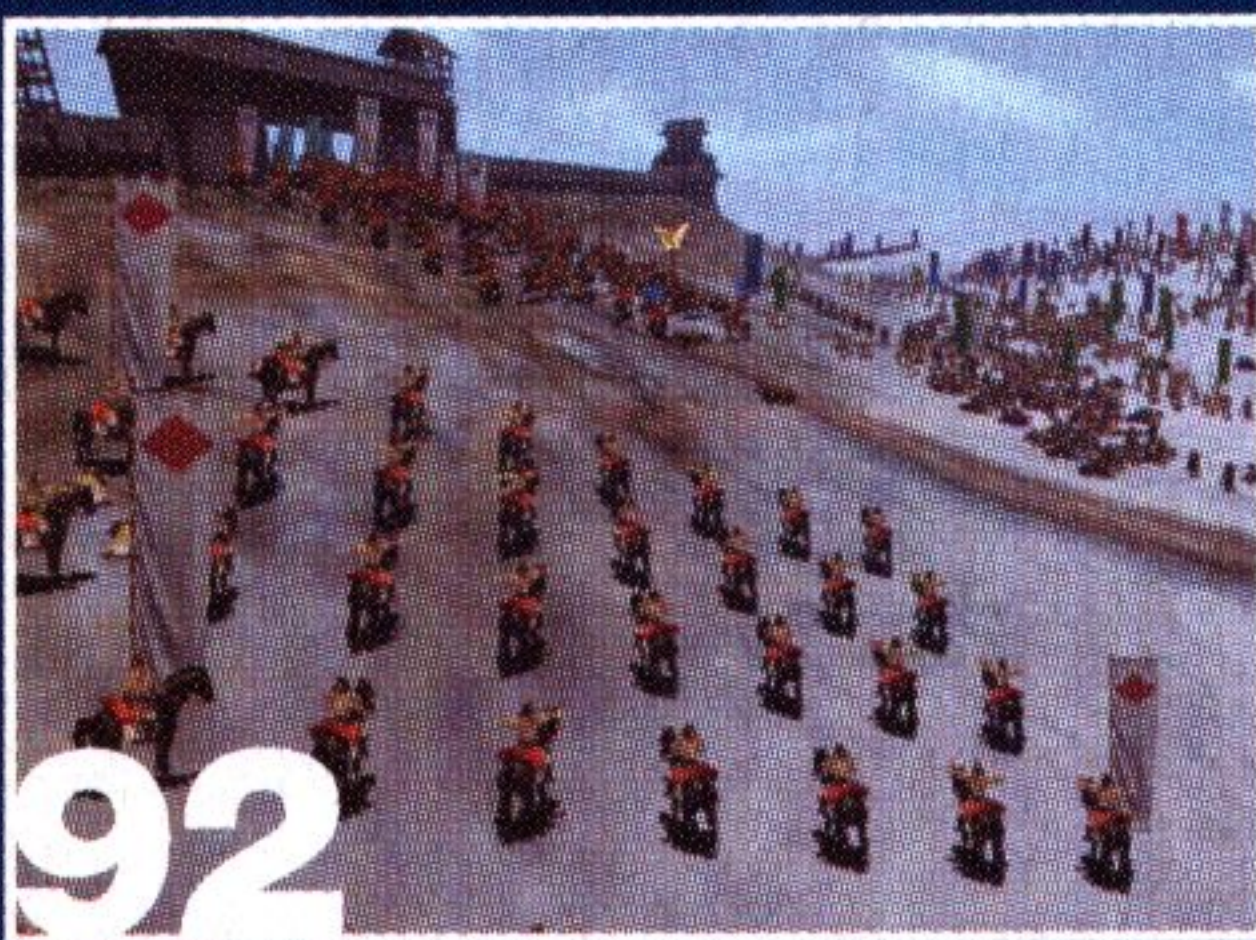
What are you most looking forward to doing in *Grand Theft Auto III*?

Playing it for free

Using a mouse



70

THE ITALIAN JOB
 The game of the cult film


92

RE-RELEASES
 Strategy games going cheap


94

UPDATES
 Three multiplayer reviews


96

SUPERTEST
 Battle of the RTS games

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

70 THE ITALIAN JOB

STEAL SOME GOLD AND LEG IT IN SCI'S RACER

74 GHOST RECON: DESERT SIEGE

FIRST ADD-ON PACK TO THE SQUAD-BASED TACTICAL SHOOTER

76 2002 FIFA WORLD CUP

WIN IT IF YOU CAN

78 BLOOD OMEN 2

MORE BLOODY VAMPIRE POWER STRUGGLES

80 ULTIMA ONLINE: LORD BLACKTHORN'S REVENGE

EXPANSION PACK FOR OLD-FAVOURITE ULTIMA ONLINE

81 WARLORDS BATTLECRY 2

SECOND REAL-TIME OUTING FOR THE WARLORDS FRANCHISE

84 THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY

THE SIMS JUGGERNAUT JUST KEEPS ON ROLLIN'

86 HOOLIGANS: STORM OVER EUROPE

YOU'VE HEARD THE HYPE NOW READ THE REVIEW

87 NASCAR RACING 2002 SEASON

ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND WE GO

88 JANE'S ATTACK SQUADRON

TAKE TO THE SKIES FOR SOME DOGFIGHTS AND BOMBING RAIDS

89 THE SETTLERS IV: THE TROJANS AND THE ELIXIR OF POWER

89 MOON TYCOON

90 WARCOMMANDER

90 MALL TYCOON

91 SKI PARK MANAGER

91 IL-2: EASTERN THUNDER

92 RE-RELEASES

INCLUDING ROBOFORGE, THE LONGEST JOURNEY, ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND, EVERQUEST GOLD PACK AND MORE

94 UPDATES

JEDI KNIGHT II MULTIPLAYER, C&C: RENEGADE MULTIPLAYER AND WARRIOR KINGS MULTIPLAYER

96 SUPERTEST

BATTLE OF THE RTS GAMES: SHOGUN: WARLORDS VS WARRIOR KINGS VS BATTLE REALMS VS Z: STEEL SOLDIERS VS COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS



74



76

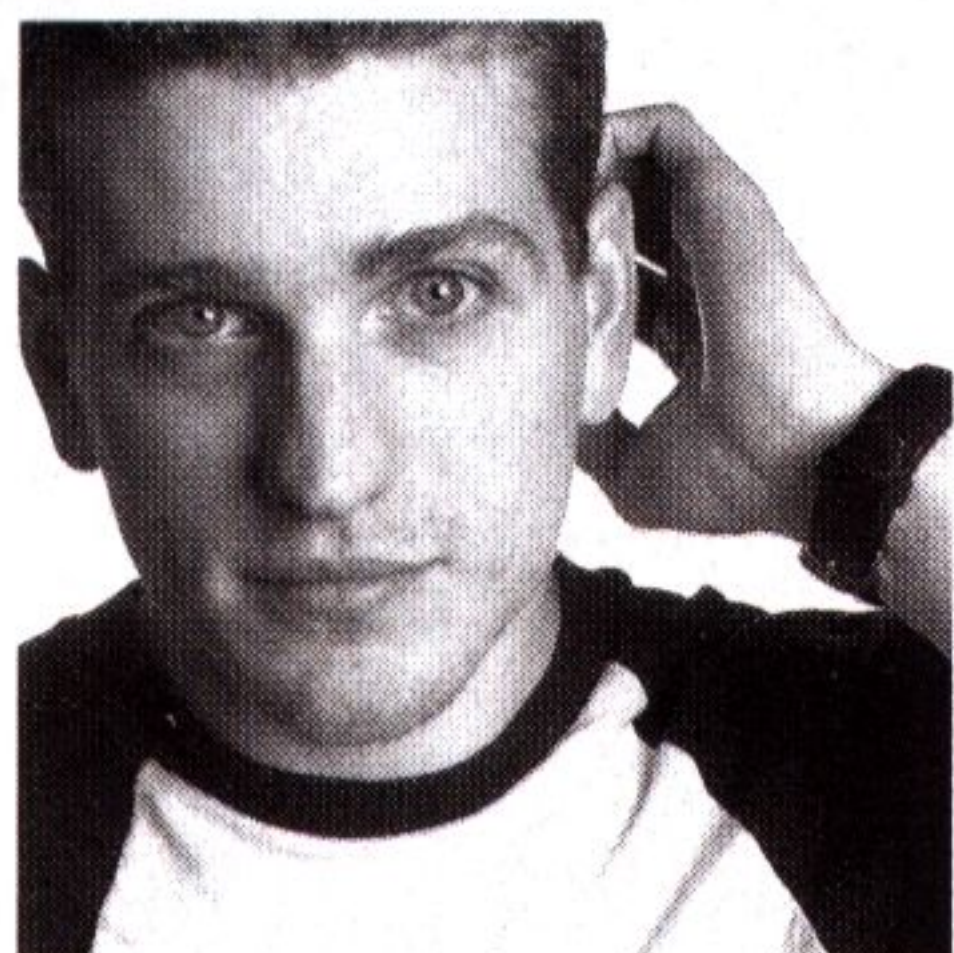


78


MARTIN KORDA

Warrior Kings

Hitting people with sticks


ANTHONY HOLDEN

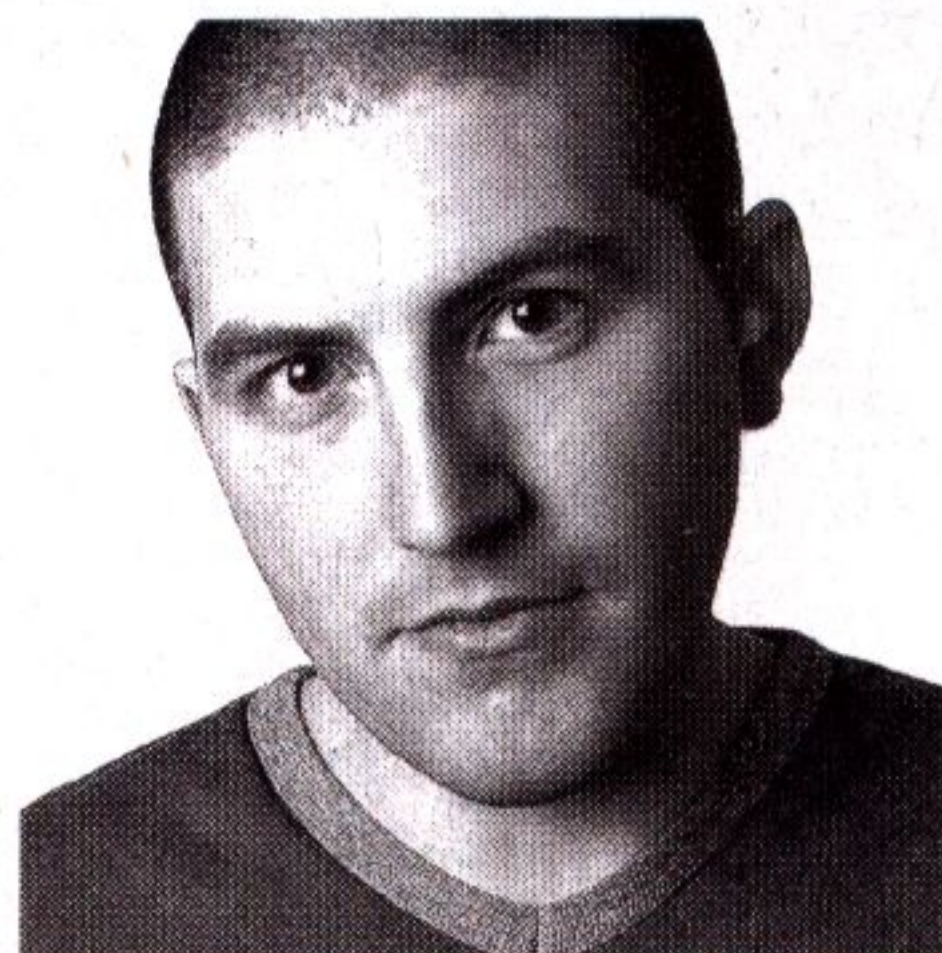
Jedi Knight II

Sniping innocent civilians from rooftops


RHIANNA PRATCHETT

Freedom Force

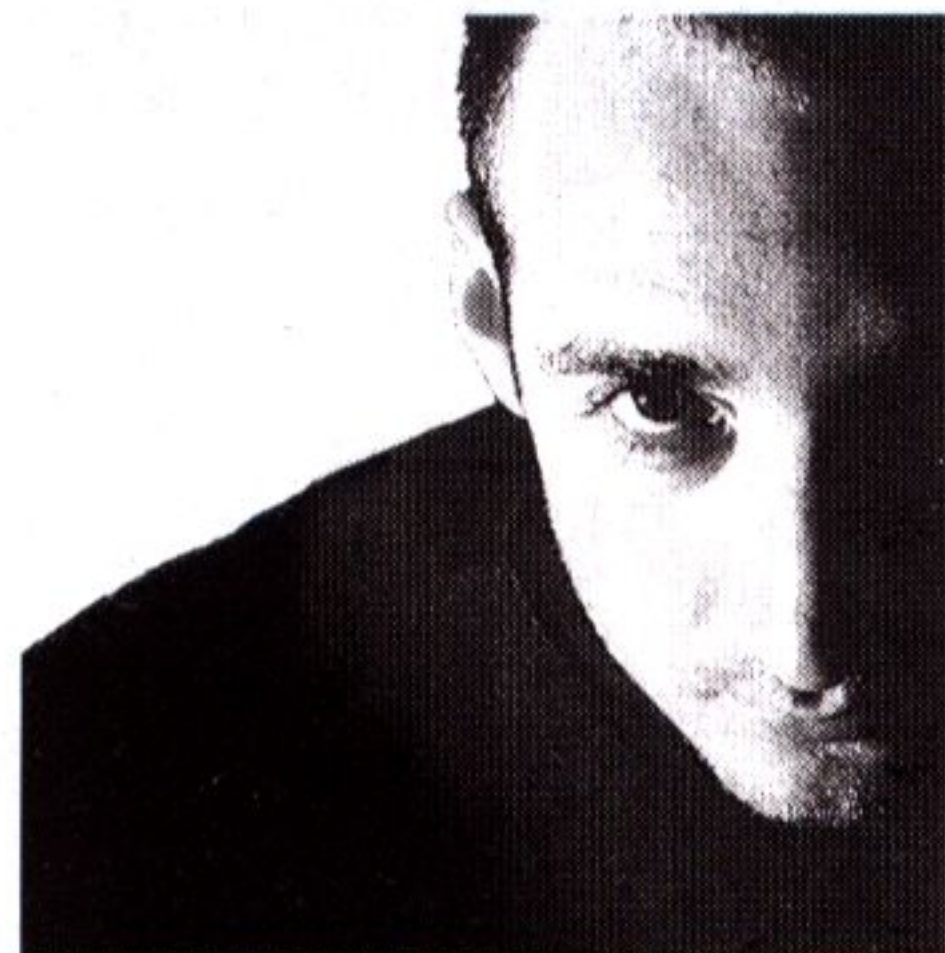
Stealing cars


MARK HILL

Ghost Recon: Desert Siege

Sniping with a mouse


STEVE HILL

 F*** all because I'm a one-handed cripple at the moment
 I'm looking forward to breakin' the law! Breakin' the law!

KEITH PULLIN

Jedi Knight II

Pissing off the Feds by smashing and nicking their cars

THE ITALIAN JOB

■ £19.99 | Pub: SCi Dev | Dev: Pixelogic | ETA: Out Now |
www.pixelogic.co.uk

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb DirectX 3D card

DESIRES PIII 600, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb DirectX 3D card

Four million in gold bullion through a traffic jam? *Paul Presley* combs his *Barnet Fair* and gets into gear

METHOD reviewing.

That's the way forward my friends. Just as actors will sometimes spend months getting into character by emulating someone in real life beforehand, so I figured the best way to really get in the right frame of mind to review a particular game is to immerse oneself in the surrounding paraphernalia as much as possible first.

Which, as far as reviewing SCi's take on *The Italian Job* goes, basically involved watching the video several times, listening to the soundtrack a lot and talking in shouted exaggerated cockney until friends and family





All together now: Camp Freddie you all know.

threatened to whip me with chains UNTIL I BLOODY WELL STOPPED (you'll have to imagine the voice).

TAKING THE MICHAEL

Now, steeped as I was in all things Caine you can imagine how the most important thing on my mind was how well the man himself made the transition to the interactive arena. Unfortunately SCi couldn't persuade the genuine article to show up, but personally I think we've got the next best thing. Hidden away in the credits is the name Phil Cornwall – professional impressionist, star of *Stella Street* and *Dead Ringers* and one of the best Caine voices around.

For legal reasons I expect that SCi would have it that

Cornwall isn't 'doing' Michael Caine himself, but an impression of the film's lead character Charlie Croker. No matter, it's still bloody good and just about lifts this incarnation of *The Italian Job* above the level of average arcade racer. ONLY JUST, MIND (sorry, I'll stop that now).

PLATES OF MEAT

The game is essentially a reworking of *Midtown Madness* (even down to the dated graphics), but with a more controlled gameplay structure and story-based missions running through the main campaign. The film's spirit is fairly well captured in the missions directly related to scenes from the film, with most of the main characters putting in an appearance and plenty of

variety in things to do (albeit all of a driving nature).

Unfortunately, what most comes across is how those levels not directly based on moments from the film do feel like mere padding. Slogging my way through interminable 'tests' such as Lorna racing with one of the chinless wonders, or Bill trying to ram Charlie off the road were soon dull and repetitive when forced to replay a dozen or so times.

Of course, as soon as the gold is in the Minis and the getaway ensues, the thrill is right back up front. Same when you're driving the bus around the Alps or trying to get the three Minis into the back *Spy Hunter*-style. As grand finales to games go, I have to admit that these latter few levels are indeed very



Benny Hill. In a computer game. There is a God.

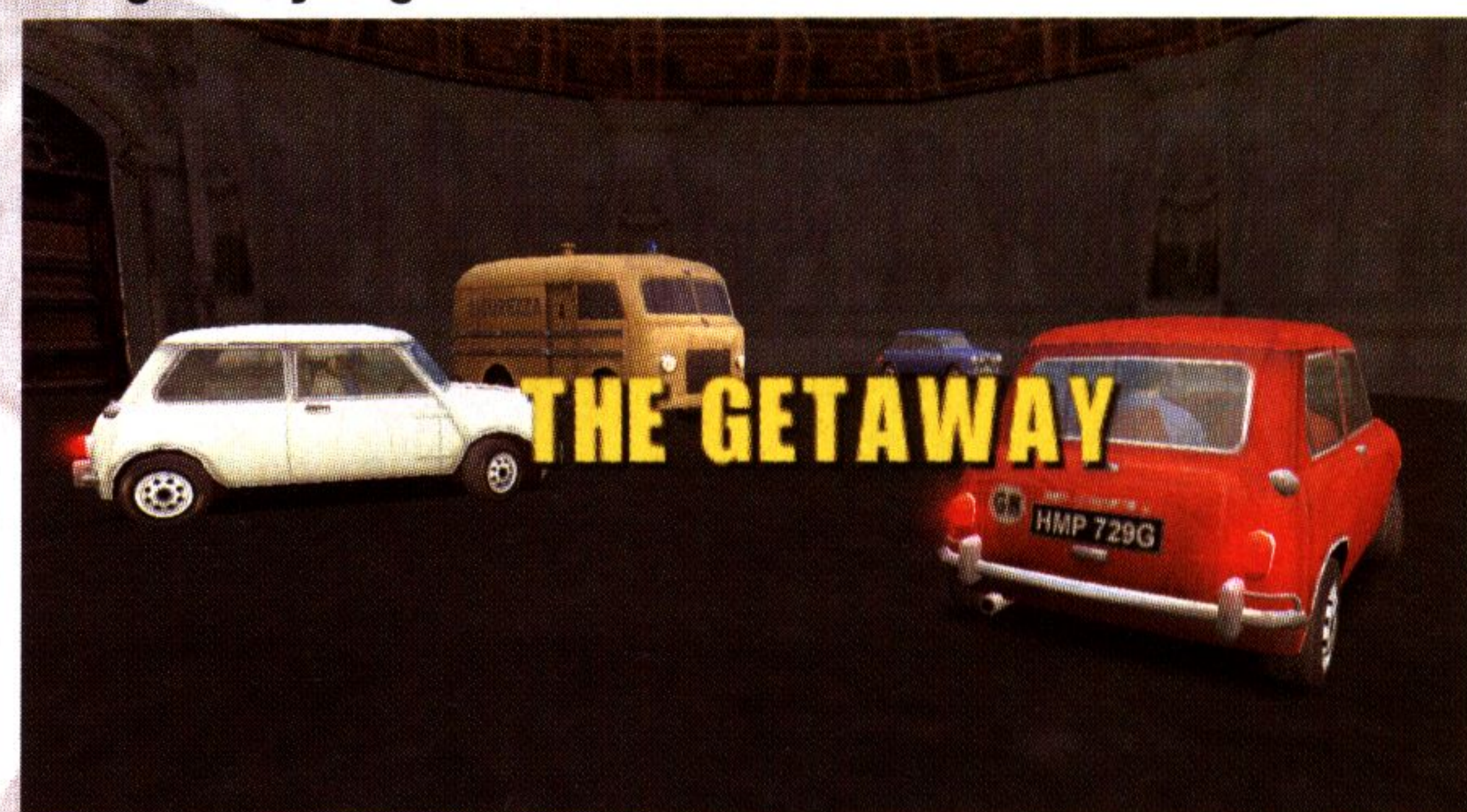
playable (especially the Minis' getaway) and standard as they are, the FMV clips played as rewards do leave you with a grin on your face.

NUTS TO YER WATCHES

Sensibly, the developers seem to have realised that a single campaign would hardly provide a lasting experience and have included a number of alternative game modes to try and liven things up. As well as a Free Ride option in either of the two main locales, you can play timed checkpoint races, cone-

“As soon as the getaway ensues, the thrill is right back up front”

The getaway begins.

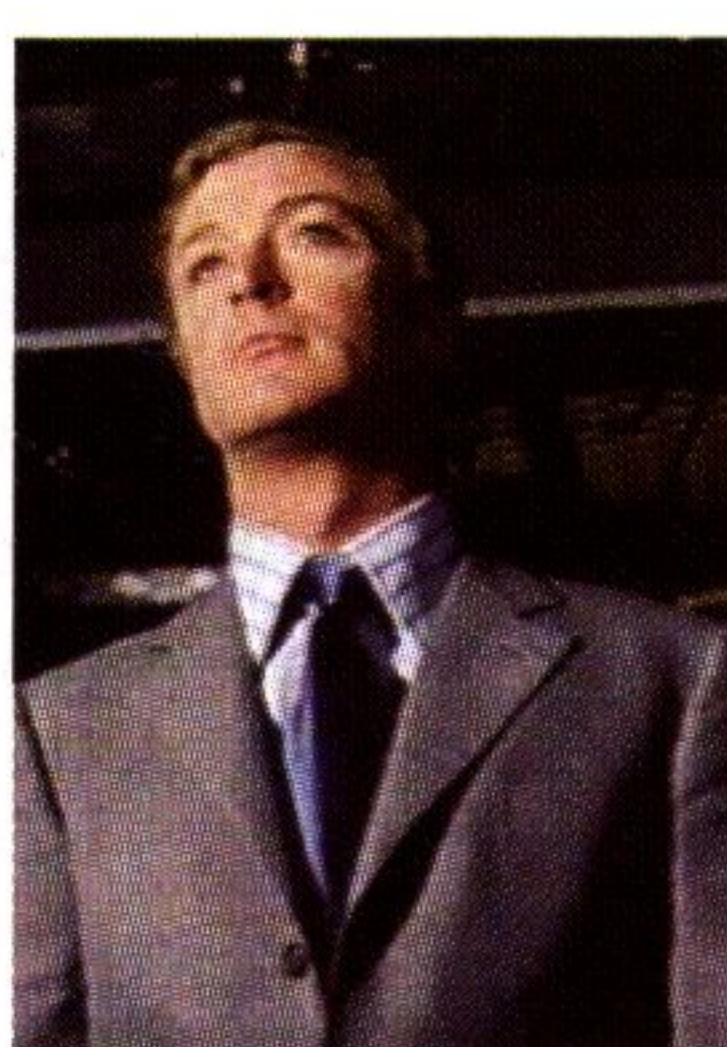


BACK ON THE JOB

WARNING: DO NOT READ THE FOLLOWING IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE FILM AS IT WILL SPOIL THE WHOLE ENDING FOR YOU

Several sequels were mooted by Paramount Pictures when the film first appeared, although obviously the film's slow box office takings put the kibosh on things. One potential script had the gold falling off the cliff and our boys trying to get it back from the Mafia. Another had the gold being rescued from the cliff-hanging bus, getting back to England and finding Mr Bridger had

struck a deal with the Italians to return the gold. Thus ensues a sort of reversal of the first film as Croker and co try to smuggle the stuff back out again. Even more intriguingly the original film had a different ending, involving Swiss banks, lost account numbers and Lorna trying to guess the right one with a pin. Luckily for everyone this was scrapped, eh?



And everyone lived happily ever after.

IT'S HAMMOND TIME

THE UNTHINKABLE HAS HAPPENED

I never thought I'd ever be writing these words in my lifetime but... if I hear the bloody *Self-Preservation Society* one more time I think I might genuinely kill someone. I used to love this tune, even more so when I discovered the film's music was

actually composed by Mr Soul himself – Quincy Jones. But the non-stop Hammond organ version played throughout the game has reduced me to a quivering heap. It just keeps going round and round and round in my head. Oh please God. Make. It. Stop.



Oh no, it's the Mah-fia!

bashing challenges and a sort of mission 'training' section that parallels the middle section of the film. And, in true console style, many of these options or a greater choice of cars to play them in can only be opened when levels from the main game are completed.

Unfortunately there's a problem with this sort of reward structure as well. It's too basic to really be worthwhile. Since this is an arcade racer and not nearly as detailed as *Gran Turismo 3* or *Project Gotham Racing* where new cars have a major impact on the main gameplay, the 'rewards' here just aren't really worth the effort, rendering the alternative game modes as little more than novelties that soon wear thin.

BIG... BIG

It's not SCI's or Pixelogic's fault that *The Italian Job*



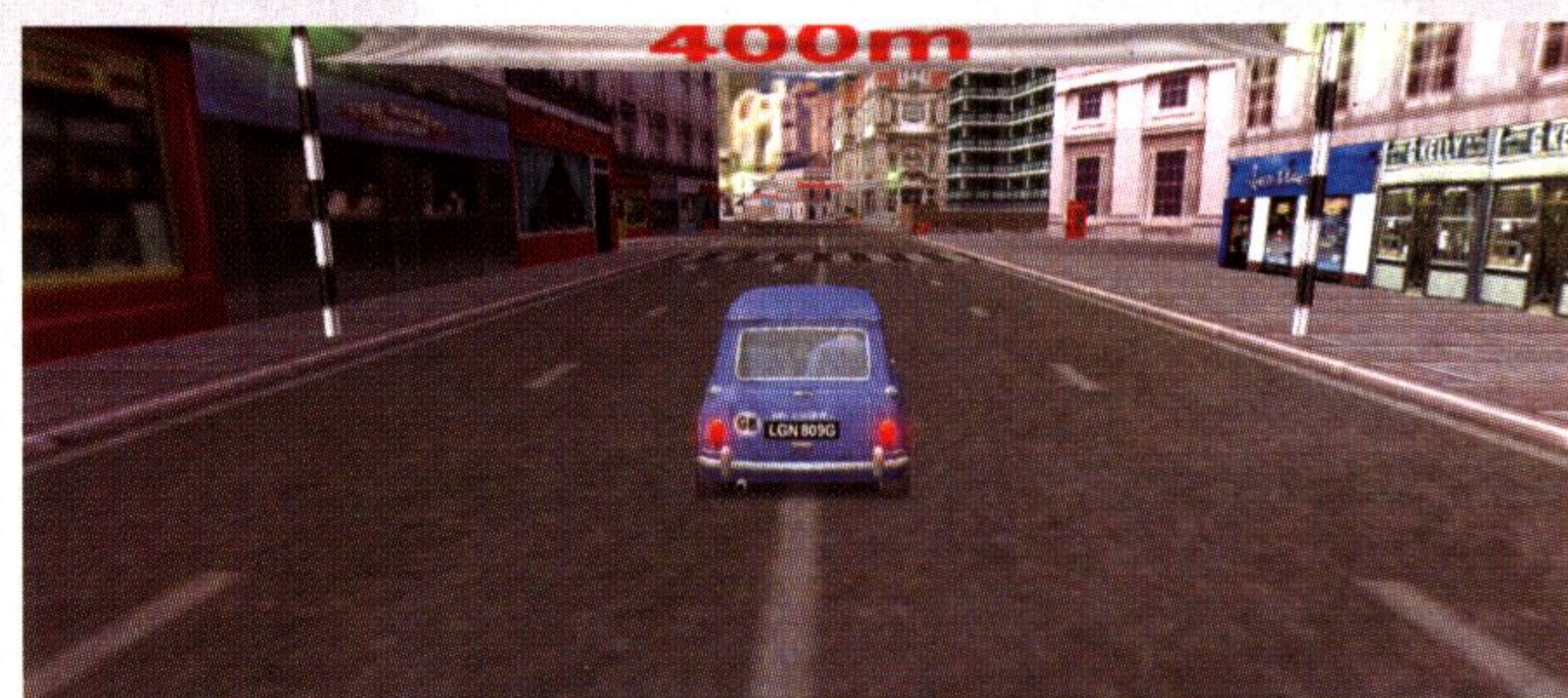
"Bloody foreigners."

"Amazingly, just the fact that it is *The Italian Job* will be enough for most fans"

underperforms in the long run. Both companies have done the best with what they had, and all the non-campaign game modes show that there's no shortage of

effort on display. The real problem is that the limitations of programming for a dated console such as the PlayStation are just all too apparent when you do a straight port across to the PC.

I hate sounding snobbish about console games (some of my best friends are console games) and the developers have clearly achieved what they set out to do – make a simple arcade racing game based on the film. But while that kind of thing might be acceptable over in PlayStation land, let's not forget that that particular



Accelerate away and come to a full stop in the specified area without touching any cones.

Challenges also act as training sessions for the caper.

audience will accept anything as long as it has lots of primary colours and flashing lights to distract them from the hell of their real-world existence. We demand a little bit more class here in the world of the PC.

MAKING DO

Still, it's hard to totally slag the game off. Amazingly, just the fact that it is *The Italian Job* will be enough for most fans to forgive some of the simplicities. It won't exactly last a lifetime, hardly even a whole weekend, but if you think 20 quid is decent value for a couple of days' play, then you're probably not going to mind too much. The final few levels are worth it alone – it's just a shame that the rest of the game isn't up to the job. Your best bet is to stick with the video and play *The Italian Job* drinking game instead. You'll feel better in the long run. **PCZ**

INPERSPECTIVE

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

Reviewed Issue 96, Score 84%
Much the same sort of thing, except with modern cars, modern settings and less structure.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

Reviewed Issue 84, Score 70%
Some more of the criminals and cars theme, this time with an overhead viewpoint.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Tongue firmly in cheek
- ✓ The spirit of the film is pretty faithfully recreated
- ✓ Several really good levels
- ✗ Too many filler (thus dull) levels
- ✗ Other game modes are not all that inspiring
- ✗ Too easy to complete

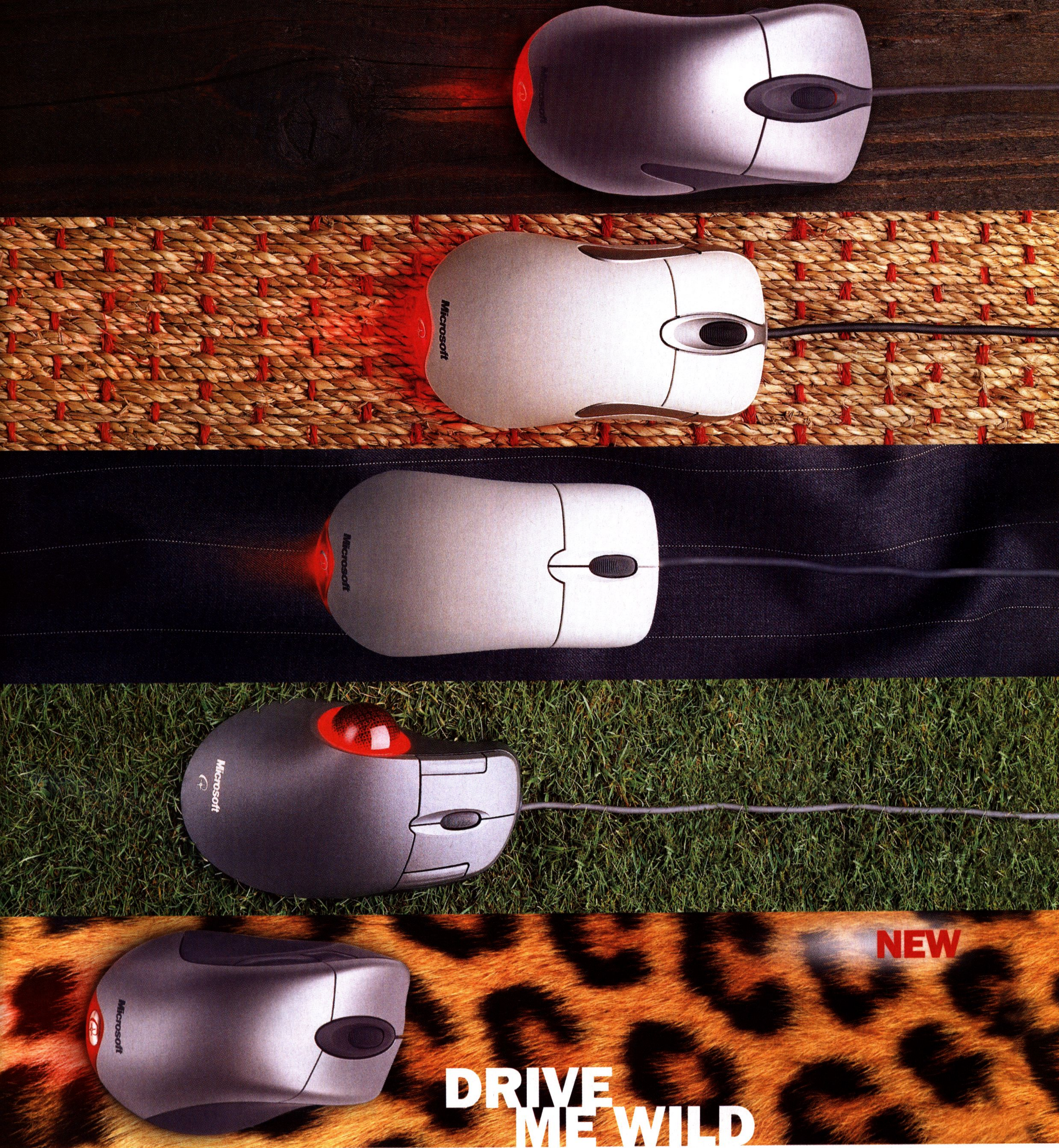
62

Not that great an idea

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

It's bleedin' obvious. There's more to the film than just fast cars, and there should have been more to the game than just driving around three maps in different cars. There's as much scope for stealthy first/third-person levels as there is for driving. Breaking into the jail to visit Mr Bridger, for instance. Or sneaking into the Turin traffic control centre to swap the computer tapes. It would have given the game some much-needed pacing. Plus, where's Irene Handl, eh?





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Microsoft®



Desert Siege does exactly what an add-on pack should do. Top Stuff.



The level design is nothing short of sublime.

GHOST RECON: DESERT SIEGE



■ £19.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Red Storm | ETA: Out Now | www.ghostrecon.com

REQUIRES PII 450, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 600 and a 32Mb 3D card

Mark Hill never thought scorching wastelands could be this much fun

EXPANSION packs should be approached with extreme caution. With a few notable exceptions, they're hastily cobbled together while the full game is still in the charts and offer nothing but a few more pounds in the publisher's pockets. *Desert Siege* is not just a notable exception, it's downright exceptional. Despite being shorter (eight missions

instead of the original 15), it is a richer, more rewarding experience than *Ghost Recon* ever was. And, unless you've forgotten, *Ghost Recon* was absolutely brilliant.

You might not think that transplanting the action from the drizzly forests of Russia to the desert borders of Ethiopia would be that much of an improvement, but the arid, camel-coloured environment is actually much better suited to both *GR*'s graphics engine and its gameplay.

LIFTING THE FOG

Two of my main criticisms of *Ghost Recon* were the levels of fogging and the fact that you spent too much time shooting at dots in the landscape. Both flaws have been dealt with. The fogging in *Desert Siege* is almost unnoticeable, presumably because there

are far fewer trees to render, and you often get to see the face of your enemy before it's replaced by a fistful of bullets. The graphics are crisper and more detailed, and the varied topography means that the miles of desert never get boring.

But what really sets it apart from *Ghost Recon* is the extraordinary level design, balanced to perfection to provide a massive challenge that keeps you engrossed every step of the way and lets you approach each objective using different tactics. While *GR*'s levels looked and felt like arranged polygons in a computer game, *Desert Siege*'s suck you in so deep you forget you're playing a game at all.

when shooting but much more intelligent in their movements. They're also much more likely to throw grenades at you when you take cover. And when you see a pineapple land under your feet you know for sure you're six feet under. The lack of trees and fogging also means you don't get shot from out of nowhere like you did in *Ghost Recon* every few minutes. It makes for a slightly less tense experience, but it's every bit as atmospheric and much more fun.

Because of this, all the great things that were already there (the excellent command interface, the RPG elements, the unlocking of specialist soldiers, the detailed character models) seem even greater. It's not very often that we recommend an add-on pack as an essential purchase, but it's not every day we get one like *Desert Siege*. **PCZ**

INPERSPECTIVE

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

Reviewed Issue 104, 90%

Desert Siege is a much more solid game, although it doesn't try to do nearly as much. If you want shooting, strategy, driving and flying all in one parcel, this will do nicely.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS DELUXE

Reviewed Issue 115, 86%

This essential Nazi-killing tactical shooter has just been re-released with a graphical update and bundled with the *Fight For Freedom* expansion pack.



WHO CARES ABOUT THE POLITICS?

This feeling is reinforced by the massively improved enemy AI, (although your own team is still prone to getting shot if left alone) which has been fine-tuned to make them slightly more fallible

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Fantastic levels
- ✓ Improved AI
- ✓ No fogging
- ✗ Team AI still slightly suspect

89

Ghost Recon was just the starter, this is the main course



FEED YOUR HABIT

computerandvideogames.com



Andy Cole, in an England shirt at the World Cup?



Beckham and Veron ready to settle their differences.

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP

■ £29.99 | Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: EA Sports | ETA: Apr 26 | www.ea.com

REQUIRES P233, 32Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PII 400, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

In preparation for the real thing this summer, Steve Hill has a kick about with the latest FIFA release

INPERSPECTIVE

FIFA 2002

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 63%

If you prefer club football to international, then this might be your bag.

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEASON 2001/2002

Reviewed Issue 113, Score 52%

If you prefer substandard tat, based on a glamorous European competition, then try this.

SO THIS IS where I'm supposed to berate EA for its despicable tactic of releasing essentially the same game every six months. The *FIFA* series has often made a mockery out of the so-called games industry: embittered journalists rail against it, PR people flap, yet every incarnation continues to outsell the previous one regardless. For all the difference it makes, we might as well get proper jobs.

However, there's work to be done, and as ever I'm ready to give the latest *FIFA* incarnation a thorough going over, in the hope that it'll throw up enough nuances to make me sit up from my cynical stupor and take note.

Lets face it, I've had enough pratice with these games in the past, and an

almost equal amount of disappointment, so I should know what I'm talking about by now. In fact, the work I've garnered from reviewing the *FIFA* series has paid for most of my furniture.

It would seem that the reason why the *FIFA* games do so well is the same reason insipid pap tops the music charts and romantic comedies fill the cinemas: many people are happy settling for less. But that's their right. If people want to keep buying the same game, why shouldn't they? So long as they're happy.

BREAK IT LIKE BECKHAM

Going on past evidence, it's hard not to think that *2002 FIFA World Cup*, will be anything but a nailed-on certainty to be among this summer's biggest sellers. That said, we wonder how sales in this country would have been affected had Beckham's last gasp free kick against Greece gone the way of his previous eight efforts, and England had then been eliminated in the play-offs. Golden Balls, indeed. Sven's boys are heading East though, (and I'll be joining them) and this irksomely named official game gives every honest Englishman

the chance to attempt the impossible. Or you could just play as France.

Allegedly in development for more than a year, *World Cup* is

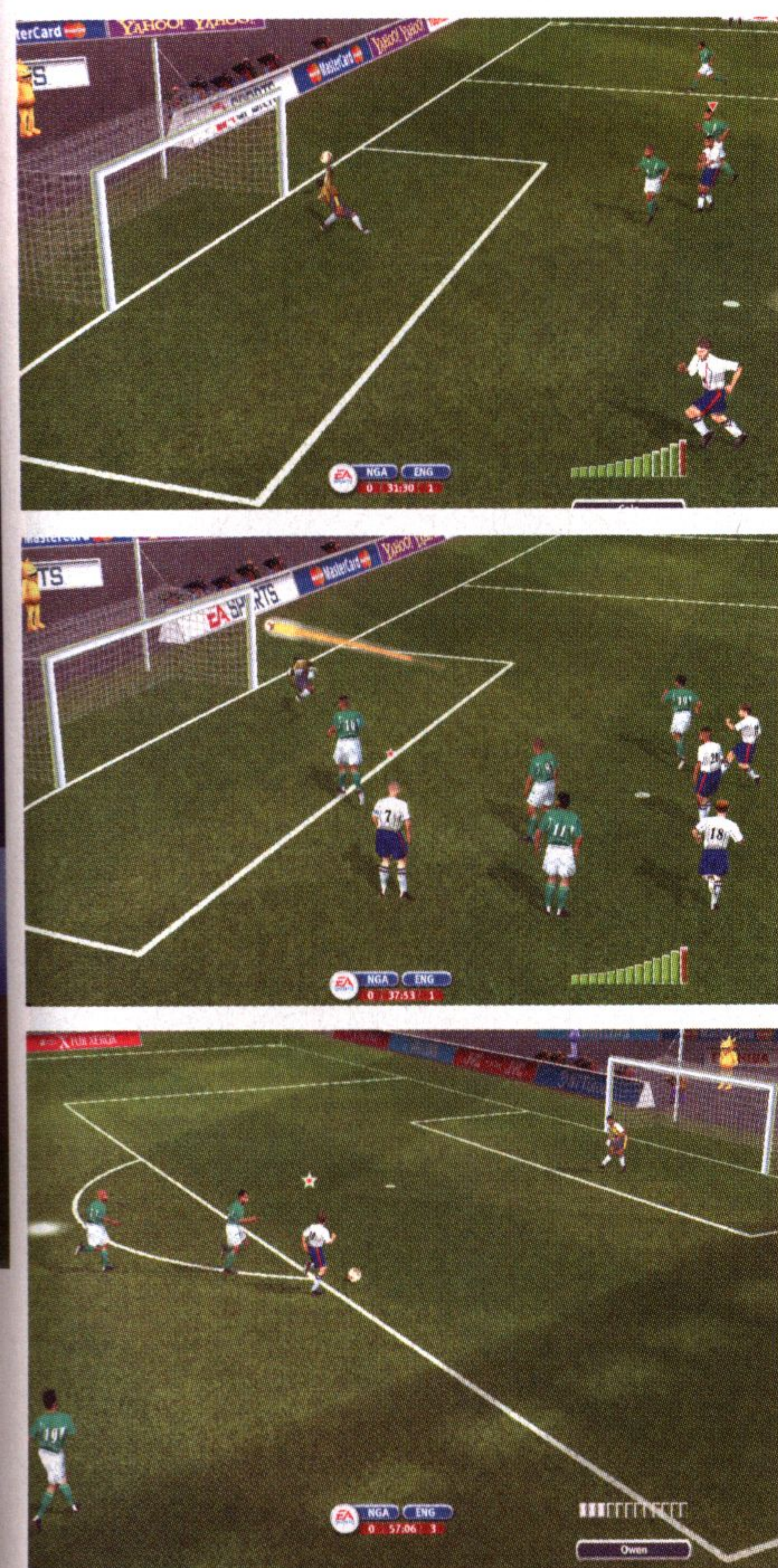
of course 'completely different' from *FIFA 2002*. That's different in the same way that a shit on a string is different from a turd on a rope. Not a reflection of the

GIVE ME HEAD



YOU KNOW YOU'RE A STAR PLAYER WHEN YOUR HEAD IS RECREATED IN A GAME

The star players in *2002 FIFA World Cup* are given the benefits of realistic heads, and look uncannily similar to their real life counterparts. It's very impressive, and the likes of Owen, Beckham, Sol Campbell, Rio Ferdinand, and Steven Gerrard are immediately recognisable, along with a smattering of other world stars. Modelling the heads of every player in the game might have seemed the obvious move, but apparently this was impractical as it is a far more complicated process than simply scanning in their faces in the manner of EA's NBA basketball games. As such, supposedly lesser players are simply given generic heads, which in the case of the Neville brothers is a marked improvement.



The boy Owen sprints clear.



The sort of thing we'll be watching through fingers come summer.

game's quality in any way, simply a vulgar analogy. The gameplay has been marginally tweaked, the biggest change being the addition of so-called star players. In the England squad, for example, David Beckham is an exceptional passer, whereas Michael Owen has the pace of a whippet. Fair enough, but surely these are simply reflecting the

fact that their shots resemble meteorites, replete with flaming trail. Frankly it's absurd, giving the game something of a cartoon feel, although for the purist it can be switched off.

GRAPPLE FANS

Otherwise, it's largely the game we know and don't love. The passing seems to have improved

hard as you can towards the goal. It's not subtle but it is effective, and exciting games are by no means uncommon. More a test of gaming dexterity than football acumen, it takes an almost physical effort to succeed, frantically pumping the sprint button and grappling with the opposition for possession of the ball.

a huge leap to professional and world class.

TURNING JAPANESE

EA says its main aim was to recreate the atmosphere of the greatest show on Earth, and it's certainly managed that. The stadiums look magnificent, and while I can't vouch for their exact authenticity just yet, I'm looking forward to being there (although I might give the dog noodles a miss). Once again, John Motson and Andy Gray supply the commentary, and they would appear to be in the pay of the Japanese and Korean tourist boards, spending almost as much time waxing lyrical over

the benefits of the local environs as they do describing the action.

It may be riddled with inaccuracies – 12 substitutes, Ronaldo starting as a left-sided midfielder – but as a piece of official merchandise, it's certainly a lot classier than *Big Brother's* Bubble and Dean's World Cup record. Ultimately, the best way to look at it is like an interactive wall chart. By the time the real thing starts, you'll know your Saitamas from your Yokohamas and will be able to discuss the emergence of the African nations with a degree of confidence. And as a bonus, it's just about playable enough to fill the month before the tournament. Then the real fun begins. **PW**

“With practice it is possible to play something resembling football, and it certainly isn't easy”

attributes of the players and should be included by default. On the pitch, the star players are recognisable not only by the star hovering over their head, but also by the motion blur when they embark on a run, and the

marginally, and it is generally possible to find a team-mate. Crossing the ball in the air is a largely worthless tactic though, as headed goals are rare. The best ploy is to slip the ball to a forward in the area and hit it as

The slide tackle is as exaggerated as ever, making it something of a lottery, whereas the foot-in approach involves a lot of leaning into the player, making it akin to a wrestling match. Tricks are reduced to a solitary shimmy, and bend can be put on the ball both when passing and shooting. The concept of sending a player on a run and slotting a through ball ahead of him remains, and when it comes off is very effective, although the ball will often go to a different player than intended. But with practice, it is possible to play something resembling football, and it certainly isn't easy on anything but the amateur and beginner levels, with



The replays have cameras all over the place.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ It's the World Cup
- ✓ Looks great
- ✓ Surprisingly playable
- ✗ It's basically just more FIFA
- ✗ Riddled with sloppiness

72

Not quite the Greatest Show On Earth



One by one you shall all die...



Dark Gifts are obtained by killing other vampires.

BLOOD OMEN 2

■ £29.99 | Pub: Eidos | Dev: Crystal Dynamics | ETA: Out Now | www.legacyofkain.com

REQUIRES PIII 450, 128Mb RAM and a 3D graphics card

DESIRES PIII 800, 256Mb RAM, 40X CD-ROM and a 64Mb or more graphics card

Keith Pullin avoids all things garlicky as he delves into this vampire-based action/adventure

WHO'D BE a vampire?

You get the same dinner every night, you can't sunbathe and you can't participate in the pleasures of the flesh without relieving your partner of all their blood. But worst of all, you never know what you actually look like because you have no reflection. It's not surprising then that vampires always seem so pissed off, after all they've got to put up with an eternity of this nonsense.

Kain is a vampire like any other. He has the usual dentistry problems and could probably do with a manicure. However, a bigger problem right now is that he's actually been 'dead' for 200 years and has just awoken to

find that he's lost all his memories and previous powers. His other pertinent problem is that Nosgoth, the land he once ruled, is now under the control of a group of militant humans known as the Sarafan. Basically, poor Kain should have woken up about a century earlier.

CHICKEN KIEV

In *Blood Omen 2*, the fourth in *The Legacy Of Kain* series, it's up to you to recover Kain's powers and unite the land of Nosgoth under vampire rule once again. *Blood Omen 2* is not a complex game. OK, there may be the odd

rudimentary lever puzzle thrown in to stem the relentless flow of blood, but effectively you have 11 levels to savagely mutilate everything you see.

At first you can only kill with your claws. However, as things

battle couldn't be easier. The lock-on fighting method keeps your closest enemy in front of you at all times and you just wade in with your weapon.

Your victims do offer some resistance; especially the knights

this Kain's rage meter increases slightly. When it reaches maximum you can perform special attacks, which do more damage than usual. You can also pick up enemies by the throat and throw them or (and this

"Kain has to drink blood to survive, so basically he has to keep killing"

hot up in the streets and alleys of Nosgoth the usual array of clubs, swords and axes appear to usher proceedings on their bloody way. Controlling Kain in

and guards who block obvious lunges, but even they still follow a preset attack pattern, which once sussed means you can usually dispatch two or even three enemies at once.

You can also block attacks yourself and every time you successfully do

really does look painful) pin them up against a wall with one hand and then with the other swing your current weapon up between their legs. Ouch.

GARLIC BREAD

Our undead hero can also kill other vampires to relearn his forgotten

'Dark Gifts'. These powers allow Kain

This ugly bunch of characters are actually friendly NPCs.



INPERSPECTIVE

SOUL REAVER 2

Reviewed Issue 111, Score 86%

The gameplay is more involved and the whole feel is less linear than *Blood Omen 2*. This is an action/adventure with looks, sound, plot and style.

SEVERANCE

Reviewed Issue 98, Score 87%

If you want a combat experience that takes skill, timing and accuracy yet still offers plenty of dismembered limbs at the end of it you need *Severance*.



Powerful enemies have more blood in their veins.



Release your anger...

to do various vampire things such as jump great distances; charm enemies so they do what you want and enable you to turn into mist. Turning into mist is actually a lot better than it sounds. For a start it gives you the ability to sneak up on an unsuspecting foe and then decapitate, garrote, disembowel or casually push a sword through the back of their neck.

Of course, regardless of the killing method employed the one thing that remains the same is drinking the blood afterwards. Kain has to drink blood to survive, so basically he has to keep killing. As far as gameplay goes you really can't get any simpler. Kill or die of thirst – not much of a choice really.

As the game progresses it becomes apparent that variety is kept to a minimum. Even on some of the later stages where the action should be getting climatic and frenetic exactly the same tactics are required: kill,

drink blood, use dark gift, solve simple puzzle, pull lever, go through door. You literally just switch on your autopilot and allow yourself to be swept along by the cut-scene driven storyline.

GARLIC BREATH

Blood Omen 2 is certainly not for the faint-hearted – you also need a fairly brave computer to run it. The massive 2Gb install takes a while on a slow CD-ROM (you're looking at anything up to an hour) and the fantastic graphics demand a hefty processor too.

Visually *Blood Omen 2* has a great industrial feel to it, similar to the *Thief* games. The atmosphere is also urban with plenty of people bustling about the city streets who react realistically to your presence. Innocent citizens even scream and run away if they spot you drinking blood from a recently dispatched enemy.

Ultimately though, *Blood Omen 2* is a console

action/adventure – nothing more and nothing less. It's very linear, very simple and very enjoyable and charming while it lasts (in a gruesome kind of way). Nothing wrong with that, but under the blood and carnage you are left with very little depth, and ultimately the game doesn't leave much of a mark. **[C]**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Great graphics and atmosphere
- ✓ Dark Gift powers work well
- ✓ Enemies can be killed in plenty of interesting and painful ways
- ✗ Very linear
- ✗ Very repetitive
- ✗ Short-term thrills

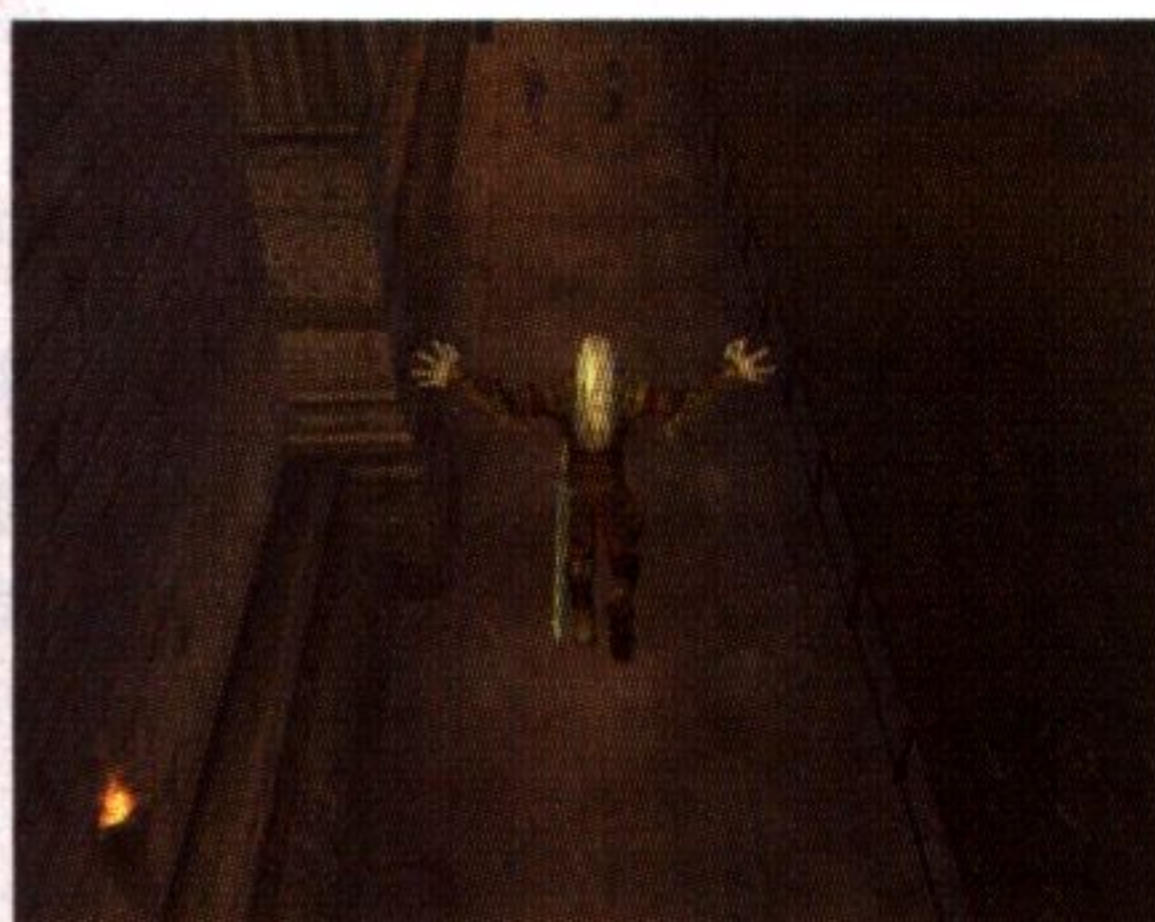
71

Gory bite-size entertainment

WALKTHROUGH →

FOG OF GORE

Kain's Dark Gifts really help him out. Here's how turning into a swirl of mist can be used to obtain your dinner...



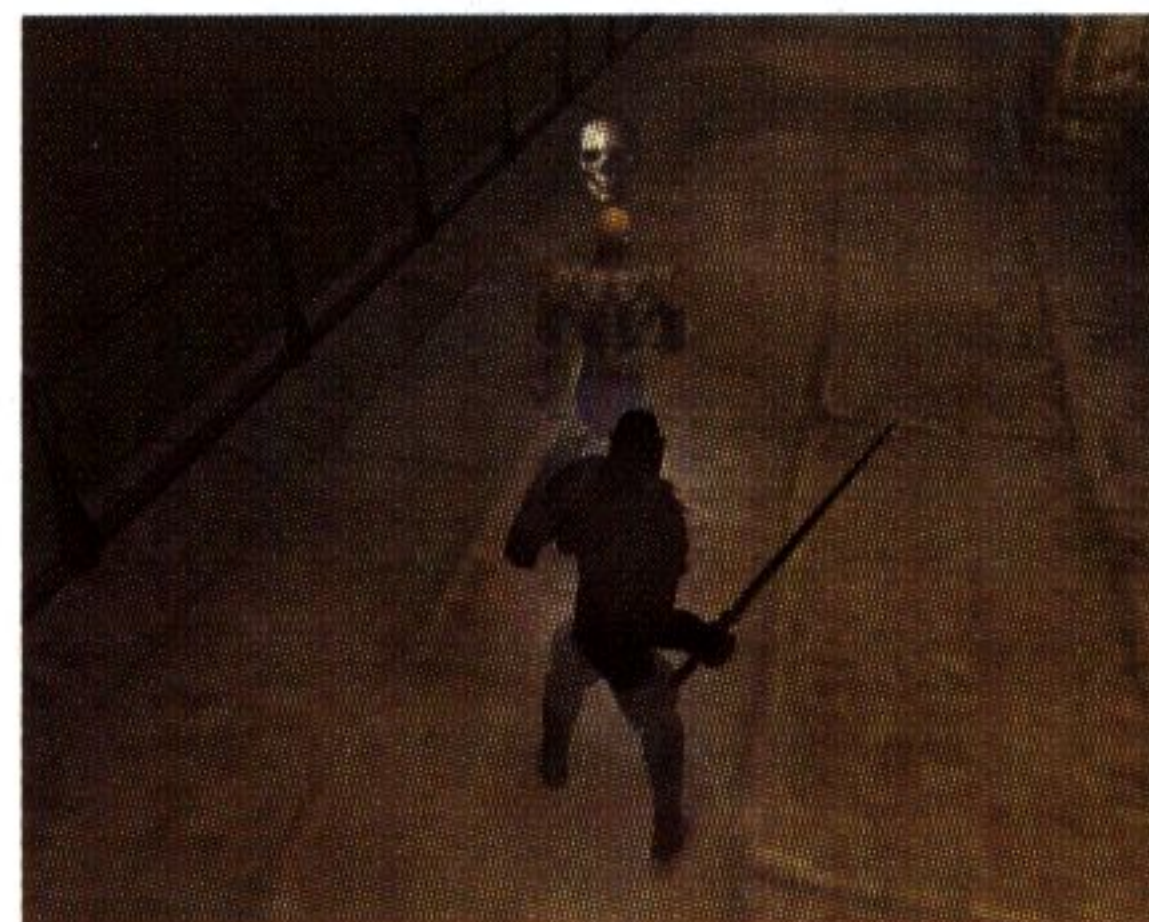
1 Silently our hungry vampire floats down towards his victims below. They're just chatting about *EastEnders* – they know nothing of their impending doom.



2 By selecting mist from the menu of dark gifts Kain blends with his surroundings. There are other powers that can be used, but right now we don't care.



3 Staying in the areas of the floor covered by mist, Kain approaches unseen and unheard.



4 When the skull appears over the head it's time to strike. The type of weapon used decides the manner of the victim's death.



5 In one swift motion the guard meets a painful end and dinner is served.



A headless one, and me, yesterday.



The new interactive quest system is a great idea.



The horde minions, post-massacre. Very nice.

ULTIMA ONLINE: LORD BLACKTHORN'S REVENGE

■ £19.99 | Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: Origin |
ETA: Out Now | www.uo.com

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 12Mb DirectX 3D card and a 28.8K modem
DESIRES PII-350, 128Mb RAM and at least a 56K modem

The game that kick-started the online RPG revolution is still going strong. Chris Anderson returns to Britannia and comes over all nostalgic. Bless

I THINK it's time to be honest with you all. All of us here at *PC Zone* are constantly telling you that gameplay is king and graphics don't matter. We tell you this all the time. It underlines our integrity and commitment to original and creative gameplay and makes you, the reader, feel safe in the knowledge that we are not swayed by eye candy. It's the meat under the gloss that really matters.

To be blunt, this isn't completely true, as much to ourselves as to you, because in this day and age, visuals are becoming almost as important as top quality gameplay. That might sound a bit strong, but the simple truth is that once you have tasted a true 3D world from

a first-person perspective there really is no going back, no matter how tasty the gameplay delights might be from a 2D alternative.

I am talking of course, about returning to *Ultima Online* from a long absence in *EverQuest*. *Ultima Online* introduced a pseudo-3D graphics engine with *Third Dawn*, but it still retains its distinctly 2D feel and seems very, very dated in comparison with just about every other online role-player available. Does that mean it's bad? No, not at all. On the contrary...

THE GREATEST GAME

Returning to *UO* after such a long exodus has made me realise all the things about it that set it apart from the competition. There's a million things to do in terms of trade skills; first-class, diverse character development and house-building. There's also tons of objects in the game world to interact with – the list goes on and on. The *Lord Blackthorn's Revenge* expansion does not do a lot to change what's already on offer but it brings a collection of new monsters to the table courtesy of comic book legend Todd McFarlane. There's a new



The houses still don't have any bloody roofs.

virtue system, reminiscent of the original *Ultima* games, makes a huge difference, nor can the new storyline featuring the eponymous Lord Blackthorn. Let's face it, *Ultima Online* has had its day. It's still a great game, once you've tasted the full-on 3D first-person delights of *EverQuest* and *Anarchy Online* there really is no going back. **PCZ**

"The graphics will shock anyone who has grown up on lush 3D environments"

INPERSPECTIVE

EVERQUEST

Reviewed Issue 80, Score 85%
This is still the online RPG of choice. Massive content and incredible game environments put it slightly ahead of the competition.

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

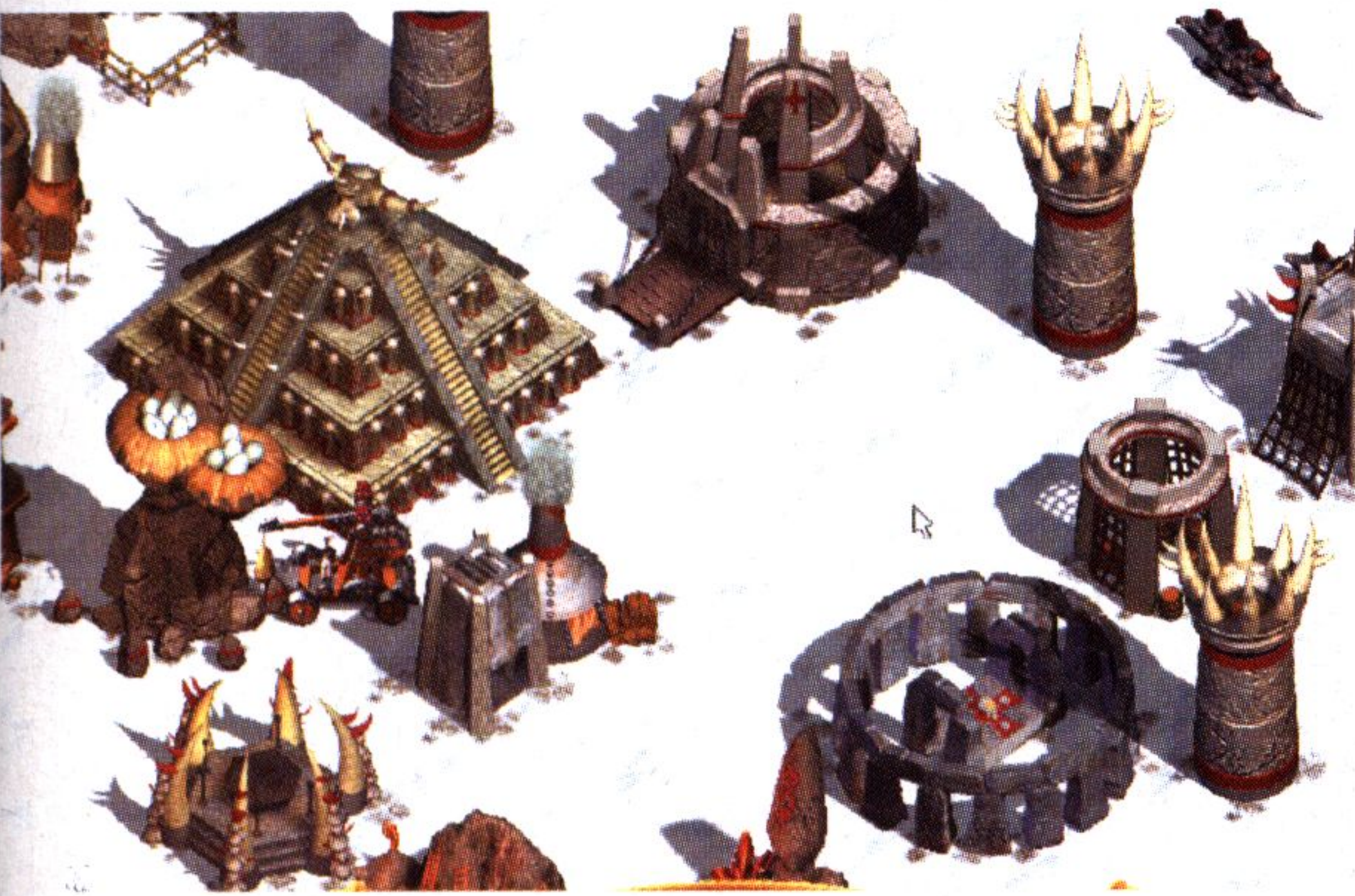
Reviewed Issue 112, Score 80%
Arguably better than *EverQuest*, *Dark Age Of Camelot* still needs a few months to establish itself to be the very best.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Incredible depth of gameplay
- ✓ Huge interactive game world
- ✓ Integrated PvP for those who want it
- ✗ Looks rank
- ✗ Archaic combat mechanics

75

**Entertaining? Yes.
Immersive? No**



It might not look great...



...But it plays a brilliant game, and that's what counts.

WARLORDS: BATTLECRY II



■ £29.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: SSG | ETA: Out Now | www.ssg.com.au/wbc2/

REQUIRES PII 350, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 450 and 128Mb RAM

More hero, goblin and orc driven RTS mayhem? Keith Pullin holds back the tears

WELL, WHERE do we start exactly? It's not as if *Warlords: Battlecry II* is steeped in originality or hype, and if you take a look at the screenshots you can see that it doesn't exactly look great either. In fact, you'd be forgiven for thinking that what we have here is a pile of clichéd driven nonsense. But you'd be wrong. Very wrong.

SAME AGAIN PLEASE

Battlecry II is a superbly crafted game that manages to successfully fuse RTS, role-playing and turn-based strategy in one very polished package. Indeed, *Battlecry II* is so well

designed and easy to play it actually forced *Medal Of Honor* onto the back burner for a while, and that takes some doing.

A lot of this quality is down to the fact that *Battlecry II* has 'borrowed' greedily from its prequel. The whole character development concept is the same as *Battlecry* insofar as your hero earns experience from battles and converts them into new skills, spells and abilities.

Managing resources and building bases is also the

same. Just as in the original game you'll find that frantically building up your own resources while sabotaging your enemies' resources with guerrilla tactics is just as effective as attacking their base head-on.

Unfortunately, the dodgy AI and pathfinding from the last game remains largely the same.

ALTERNATIVE THEATRE

That said, there are some significant differences. The most notable of these comes

in the form of an overhead map of the land of Etheria where you are able to choose which territories to conquer. Basically the whole map is a dynamic turn-based theatre of war with 12 fantasy races (there were nine in the original) trying to expand outwards from their castle to take over as much land as possible.

But it's not just a case of expanding willy-nilly and grabbing whatever land you can. Each territory contains a bonus such as improved morale, better hit-points and other incentives. Owning territories also provides you with income to buy more armies, and obviously there are places with just good old-fashioned geographical tactical advantages.

Ultimately, it may seem like child's play to decide which territory to go for next, but the truth is you can ponder for ages before you decide on exactly what your best move might be. In that respect there are similarities to *Shogun* – maybe not quite as

sophisticated, but still highly enjoyable and thought-provoking nonetheless.

If you've never played *Battlecry* then *Warlords Battlecry II* is well worth investigating. It may not be the most fashionable RTS on the market at the moment, but it certainly makes up for that fact in terms of sheer enjoyment. **PCZ**



A slightly dour looking battle scene, yesterday

INPERSPECTIVE

BATTLE REALMS

Reviewed Issue 111, 86%

Looks better and has many more tactical subtleties.

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

Reviewed Issue 115, 94%

The undisputed king of strategy. This is the classic combination of RTS and turn-based strategy that absolutely no-one should be without.

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Easy to get into
- ✓ Extremely addictive and playable
- ✓ Good turn-based territory angle
- ✓ You can take your hero online and into skirmishes
- ✗ Very similar to *Warlords: Battlecry*
- ✗ Some AI and pathfinding problems

80

Excellent if unattractive fantasy RTS

PC CD-ROM

43209 48 WEAPONS 12 MISSIONS 3 TEAMS ENGAGE



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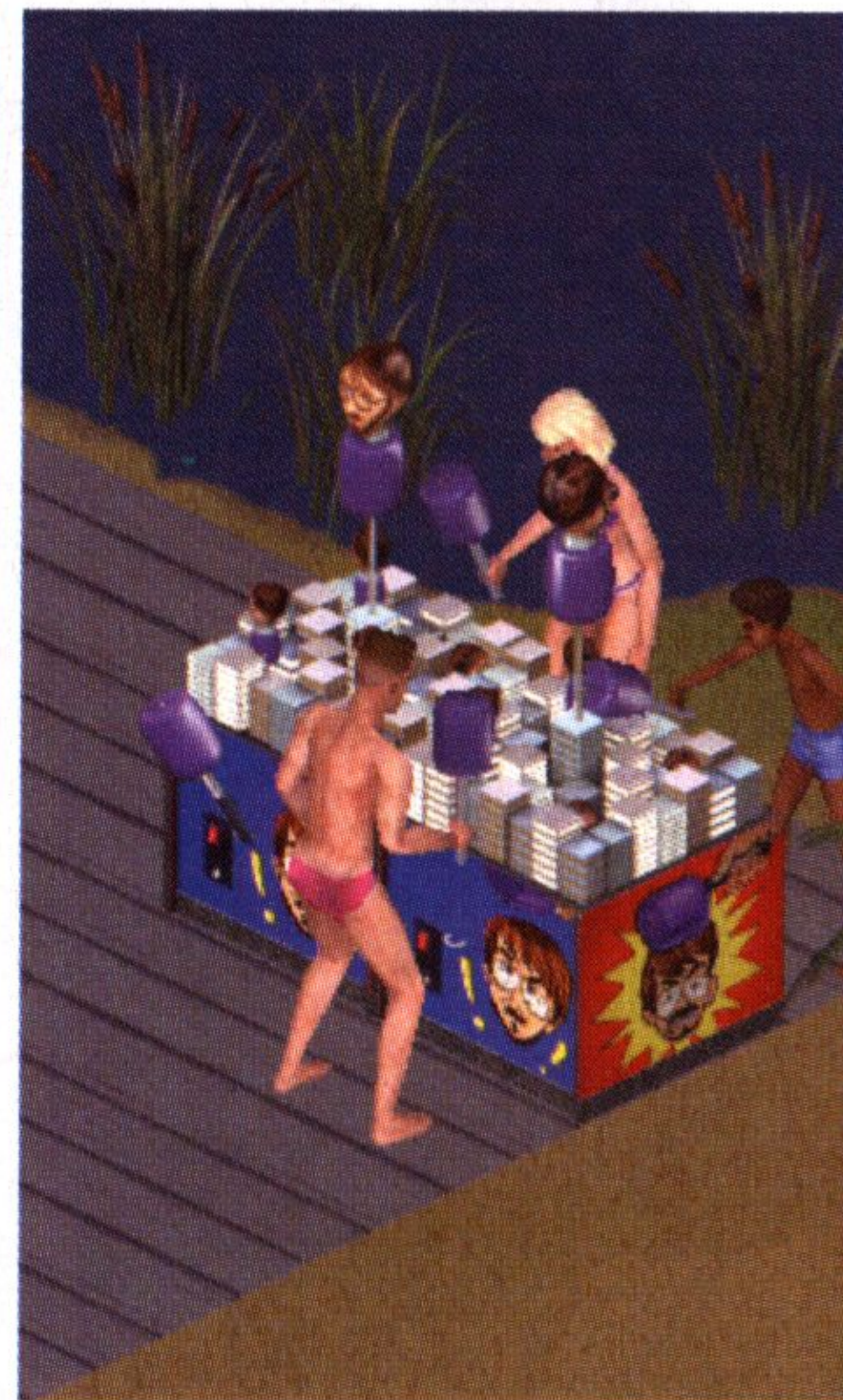


**Singularity
SOFTWARE**

7FX



You can buy souvenirs, which you can then scatter tastelessly round your house when the holiday is over.



THE SIMS: ON HOLIDAY

■ £19.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: Maxis | ETA: Out Now | www.thesims.com

REQUIRES P200, 32Mb RAM and a copy of *The Sims* **DESIRES** PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

If Mark Hill hears another bit of simtalk gobbledygook he may just snap. And it won't be pretty

THIS IS really taking the piss. What next? The Sims Make Breakfast? The Sims Undergo Minor Surgery? The Sims Shit In A Bucket? Nothing would surprise us as the relentless money-making machine continues to paint the charts grey, with add-on after add-on.

The reason I enjoyed the game when I first reviewed it more than two years ago was that it gave you enough freedom to be anarchic. It was clever enough to allow you to record

your very own snuff movie, complete with torture, scatology and lesbianism. But once that had been achieved, once you had stripped your sims of their last vestige of dignity, starved them to death and watched them indulge in harmless petting, you were left with a gloriously inane pastel-coloured world full of idiotic laughter, jobs

and meals in a wholesome, irony-free American suburb.

WHERE'S FRANK BOOTH?

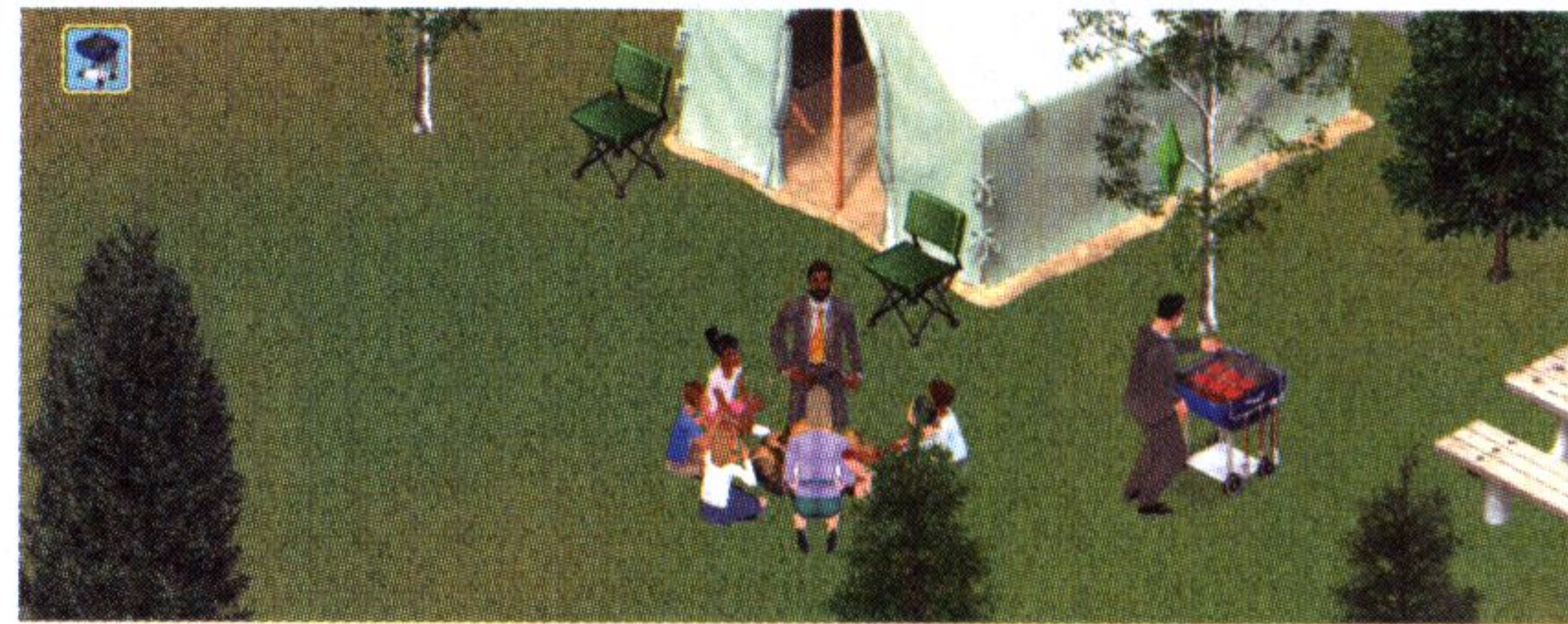
Having been forced to play it again and again though, I'm starting to see through the rainbow filters and the bright plasticine aesthetics of this simulated life. And there is



Here is the map of the new resort area.

STAY AT HOME

WE CAN THINK OF BETTER HOLIDAYS FOR THE SIMS TO GO ON



Don't you find it depressing that people pay the price of a top range PC just to spend two weeks cracking their greasy skin on a beach and digging sand out of their orifices? If all you're after is slow immolation why not stay at home and hold a cigarette lighter over every inch of your body?

In fact, that's something we wouldn't mind doing to the sims, who seem to have such trite vacations. We can think of a few ways this expansion pack could have been improved. For one thing it could have done with some realistic touches: old women sunbathing their saggy breasts on the beach, holiday reps on the verge of a nervous breakdown, toes lost to frostbite. How much improved it would be if you could watch your sim run to the toilet clutching his sphincter after drinking a glassful of tap water.

And for some serious fun, what about piranhas in the lake reducing your sims to bloody bones and a nice axe-wielding chap in a hockey mask stalking them through the campsite?

INPERSPECTIVE

THE SIMS: HOT DATE

Reviewed Issue 111, Score 71%

Very similar to *On Holiday*, except you go shopping, dancing and dining with your lady. Try taking a real lady out.

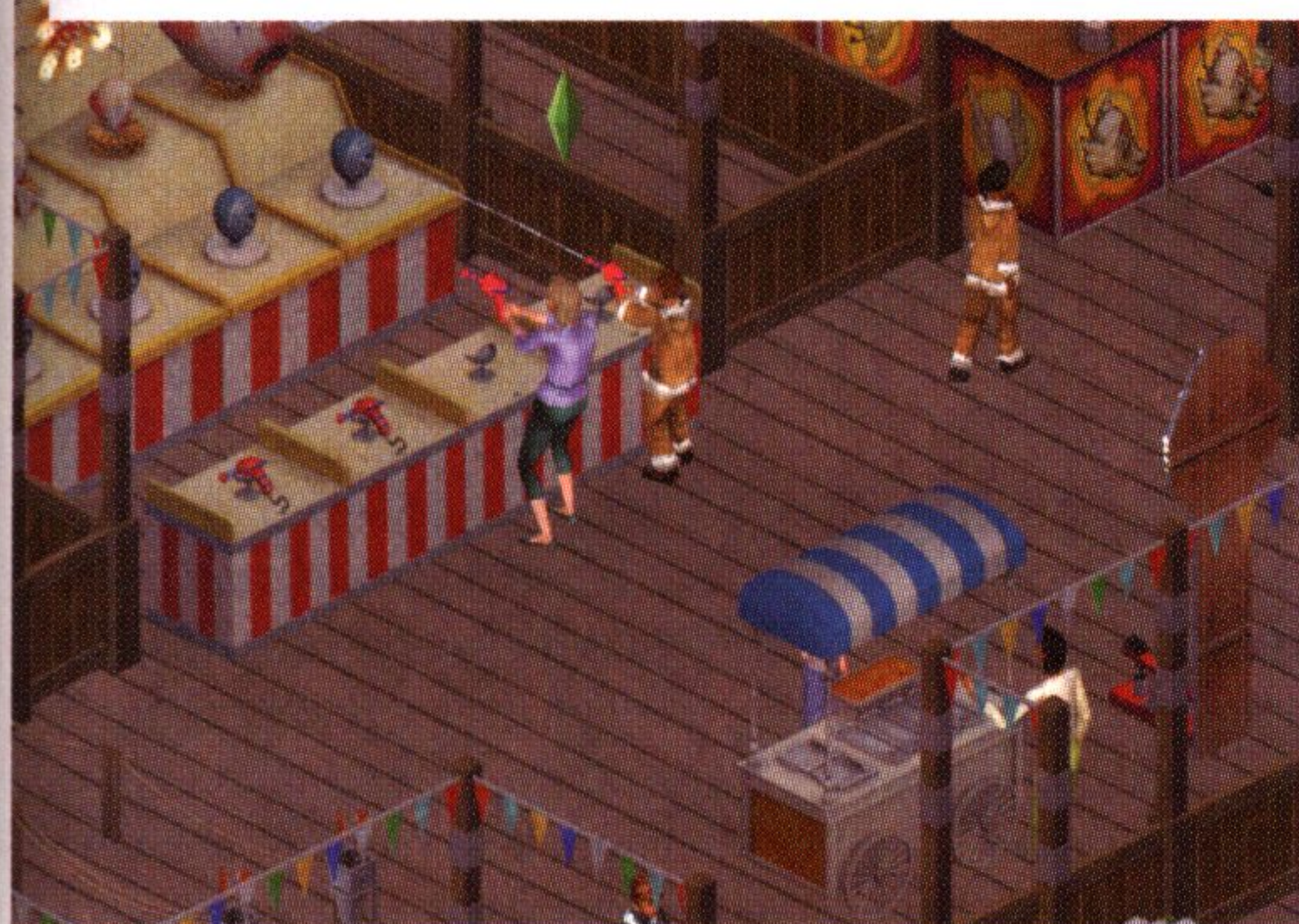
CAESAR III

Reviewed Issue 70, Score 92%

Forget all this *Sims* nonsense and spend a holiday in Rome. It might be old, but for city-building it still has no match.



Children will have tantrums and start armpit farting uncontrollably if they're not being entertained enough.



You can win money playing games and even find treasure, but if that doesn't take your fancy you can always just relax in the pool.

something deeply disturbing about its ruthless cheerfulness and retarded baby-voices. The mock-'50s look has a hint of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* about it (the perfect American dream simmering into a nightmare under the surface), and one can

your sim picked up a phone. *Hot Date* came as a pleasant surprise because it wasn't the complete rip-off the first two expansion packs were. For one thing it added a completely new area, Downtown, where your sims could go out on

let up in the micromanagement aspects, and you still have to ensure your sims maintain their friendships and stay regular. As always, listening to the sims' infantile voices is like applying a cheese grater to your spinal cord while the music is possibly the

On Holiday lets the builders among you construct a resort, with the advantage of unlimited resources. This Lego side of *The Sims* is another big reason for its success, as is the fact that it is endlessly customisable. There is always a new pair of knickers to download, a new wallpaper scheme to paste on, a new dishwasher to discover. It has allowed legions of grown men and women too ashamed to play with dolls to give full vent to their regressive childish fantasies.

The creator Will Wright must be cackling insanely as he rolls in his swimming-

pool filled with 100 dollar bills, and you can't really blame Maxis for squeezing its success for all its worth, even if it goes against everything modern games should be about. Yes, people play games to lead alternate lives. But they usually take the opportunity to go on a murdering rampage, save the world or cast a spell and not eat, sleep, defecate and work in an endless cycle just to earn enough to pack up the wife and kids for a weekend at Butlins. **PCZ**

"Listening to the sims' infantile voices is like applying a cheese grater to your spinal cord"

almost imagine a severed ear lying among the beetles and grass roots in one of those toneless gardens your sims do enjoy barbecuing and hot-tubbing in. Maybe I'm reading too much into it, but after playing through my fourth expansion pack, I feel like Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*, eyes taped open and undergoing some form of mindless reprogramming.

SIM OLD SIM OLD

First came *Live It Up*, which was nothing more than a collection of clothes, careers and furniture; then *House Party*, which was content to add the option "throw a party" when

dates, have dinner and shop for lingerie.

On Holiday follows the same line of thinking. Pick up the phone, call a cab and you're taken to a resort divided into several areas (with the snowy log cabins just a stone's throw away from the beach). There are loads of activities for your sims to indulge in, including beach volleyball, sandcastle building, archery, fishing and snowball fights. If that doesn't do it for you, you can always spend a night in an igloo, try to win prizes on fairground-style games, play on coin-ops or do a bit of mini-snowboarding. Despite the holiday tag, though, there's no

worst ever. Fancy a half yodelling-act, half mock-Caribbean tune? Didn't think so. How about a "goo goo" rendition of *Kumbaya* as your sims sit around a campfire? See, I told you there was a sick and twisted undercurrent to all this niceness.

GLORIFIED DOLLHOUSE

As with *Hot Date* before it,



PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Adds a whole new area to the game
- ✓ Lots of things to do
- ✗ We're sick and tired of *The Sims*
- ✗ It's still the same infuriating game it's always been

66

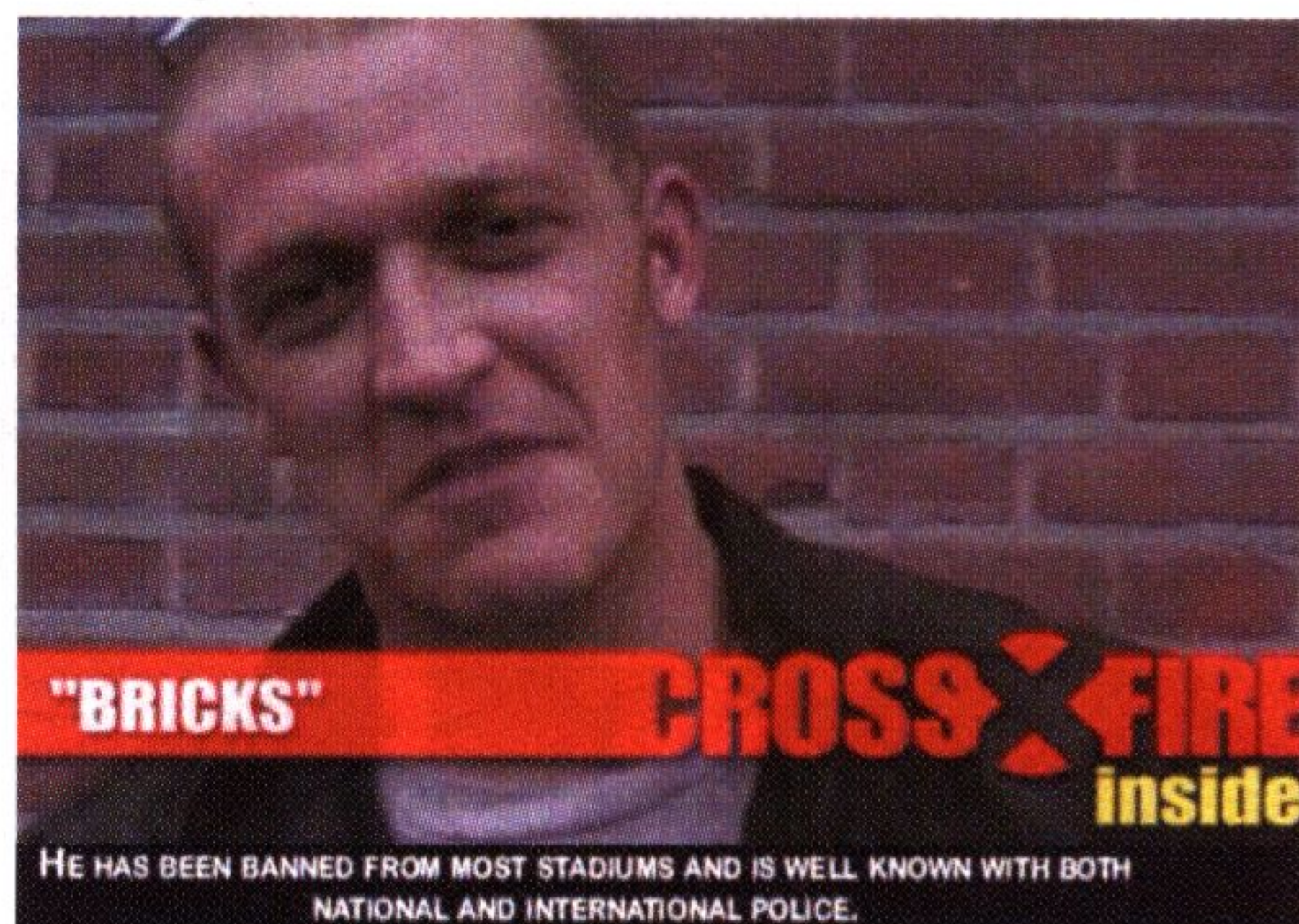
Can we take a holiday from *The Sims* now, please?



"You're going home in an organised football coach..."



"You'll never make the station..."



HOOLIGANS: STORM OVER EUROPE

■ £29.99 | Pub: Darxabre | Dev: Darxabre | ETA: Out Now | www.hooligans-thegame.com

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM and a 4Mb 3D card DESIRES PIII 600, 128Mb RAM, 8Mb 3D card

Trouble on the terraces? Steve Hill hides in the bogs

WITH THE obvious exception of girls kissing, there is no finer sight than grown men of limited intelligence punching each other hard about the face and neck in the name of association football. Admit it. If there's ever a sniff of football-related scandal on the news, you're glued to the screen, revelling in the sight of drunken

youths running amok in some foreign land. It's great television, and the media are only too aware of this, giving heavy rotation to the slightest hint of bother. The papers fill countless pages with it, generally describing a bit of chair-throwing as an unstoppable orgy of violence. Those same newspapers that whipped up a frenzy during Euro 2000 have been frothing at the mouth about *Hooligans: Storm Over Europe*, expressing their moral outrage by effectively providing free advertising for the game.

NO SURRENDER

We've finally played it, and ethical validity aside, we can confirm that it's not a documentary. Without condoning it in any shape or form, the majority of

football hooliganism involves pissed blokes running in random directions, hopping on the back foot, limbs flailing wildly, occasionally landing the odd rabbit punch amidst a flurry of windmilling. Clearly, there have been more serious incidents, and it is these that provide the inspiration for *Hooligans*, a ludicrously over-the-top, allegedly comic take on the scourge of football.

A mission-based affair, various scenarios are played out in a series of unspecified European cities. Troops are assigned to leaders, and more

can be recruited in local hostleries. Looting shops provides revenue, and this can be spent on weaponry, with traditional clubs and knives augmented by Molotov cocktails, fireworks, and even guns and bombs.

SMASH IT UP

The leaders aside, there are five basic units, and they bear very little similarity to the Burberry-clad pond life that regularly sully England's overseas engagements. Hardest of the lot is an 18-stone bovver-booted skinhead – a *Daily Mail* cliché – and he is joined by a balaclava-wearing pyrotechnics expert, a biker, a burglar, and curiously, a shell-suited raver, directly contradicting the theory that Ecstasy culture brought

about a momentary outbreak of peace on the terraces. Each has a particular skill, and these are used, by and large, to kill or maim rival supporters and the police. It genuinely is an unstoppable orgy of violence. Throw in beer, drugs and prostitution, and you get the general idea.

As a game, *Hooligans* leaves a lot to be desired, and much of the challenge comes from grappling with the limitations of the interface and AI rather than the complexities of the missions. There are few concessions to modern technology such as zooming in or rotating the screen, and the whole thing looks very dated – hardly surprising considering they've spent the last two years trying to get it published. But it's finally here, and we now know that not only is it in bad taste, it's also quite a bad game. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Mildly playable
- ✓ Great live action cut-scenes
- ✗ Fiddly interface
- ✗ Scarcely football related
- ✗ Unforgivably dated

38

A storm over nothing



Some vehicles can be used, mainly to kill people.

INPERSPECTIVE

COMMANDOS 2

Reviewed Issue 108, Score 91%

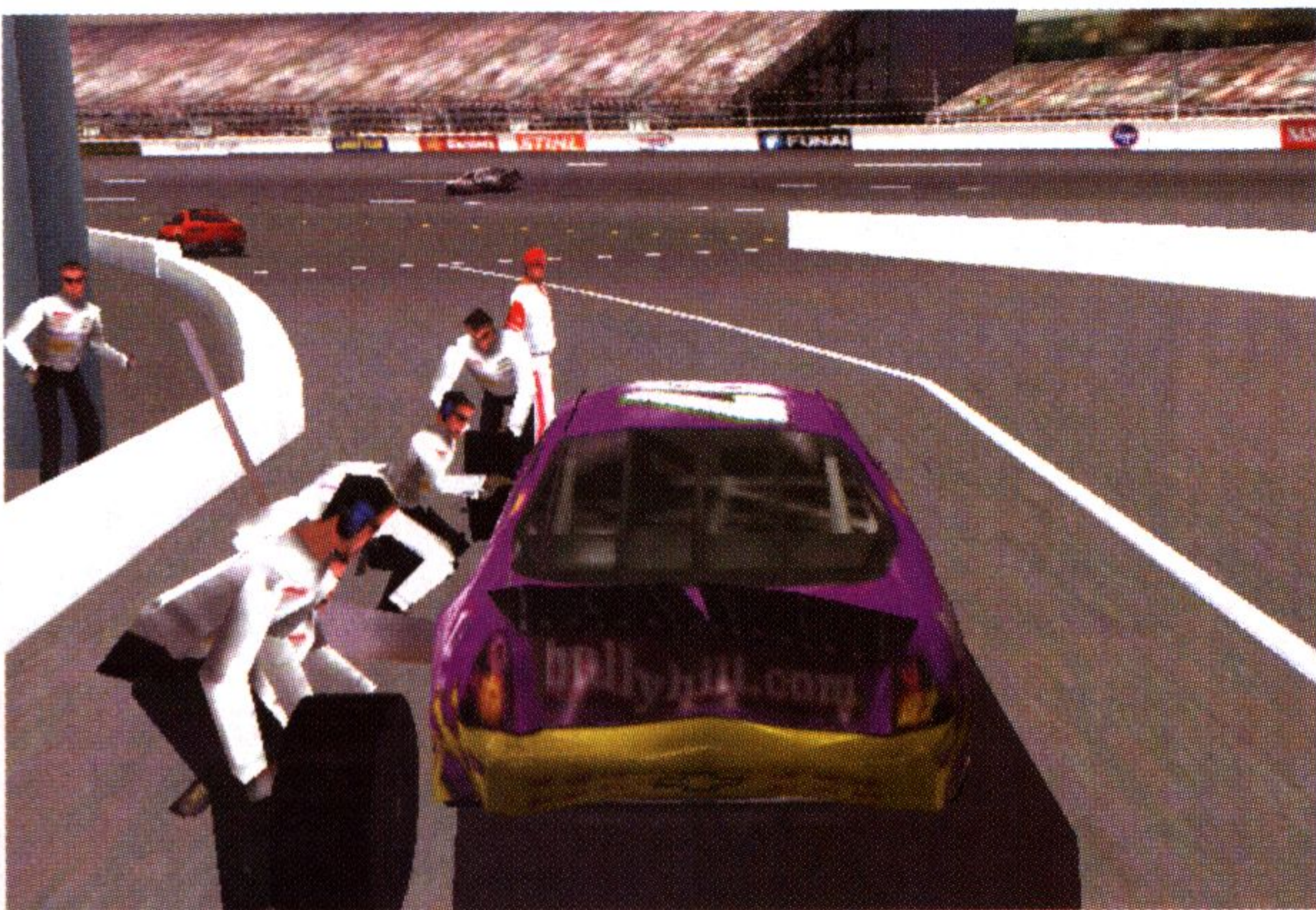
Cosy old World War II is fine for games, because only about 20 million people were slaughtered.

POSTAL

Reviewed Issue 78, Score 10%

Not necessarily a direct counterpart, but it has a similar stench of cheap sensationalist nastiness.





It might be US-centric but at least you get to overtake a few cars.



Keep your hands on the wheel, your eyes upon the road, and most importantly keep going left.

NASCAR RACING 2002 SEASON

■ £29.99 | Pub: Sierra | Dev: Papyrus | ETA: Out Now | www.papyrusracing.com

REQUIRES PII 450, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 800, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Steve Hill is going right round baby, right round, like a record baby...

WHEN observing somebody playing a NASCAR game, it is traditional to make a comment along the lines of "next left, mate," before collapsing into hilarity at your incisive rapier wit. This is what is known as a games industry

do 200 laps of an anti-clockwise oval in what really is little more than a streamlined tank. An absurdly dangerous activity, competitors often suffer a violent death, at which point one of their 18 children takes up the sport.

evident in this seasonal update, providing at least a match for the most anal of Grand Prix simulations. You might simply think it's a case of slapping down a few ovals, but the subtleties of each of the tracks have been painstakingly recreated. How do

"Clearly, you'd have to be sick in the mind to attempt full-length races with all the rules switched on"

joke, something that the games themselves are often treated as. It's the American Sports syndrome once again, whereby us Brits fail to comprehend the subtleties of a sport in which moustachioed rednecks

RABID
As a blueprint for an involving virtual experience, NASCAR might not be the most obvious choice, but it should not be dismissed out of hand. Papyrus has long been recognised as the master of NASCAR games, and its rabid attention to detail is again

we know? We've been watching Channel 5 (that's commitment), whose NASCAR coverage coincided with the review of this game. And whaddya know? It's identical, from the cracks in the asphalt to the trackside buildings.

It's a common misconception that all NASCAR tracks are the same. In fairness, the vast majority are left-handed ovals, but with the shortest clocking in at around 15 seconds a lap and others taking up to a minute to circumnavigate, differing approaches are required. Races are a question of finding a rhythm, hugging the racing line and picking off your opponents one at a time, aided by the radio instructions of your extremely useful pit crew. Not crashing is also a superb ploy, and while it can be tempting to give the car in front a nudge, it is probably best approached as a non-contact sport.

SICK

Clearly, you'd have to be sick in the mind to attempt full-length races with all the rules switched on, particularly as you'd spend much of the time cruising round in single file under the jurisdiction of the yellow safety flag. But the features are fully

flexible, with both arcade and simulation modes offered, and it is possible to find a happy medium through tweaking driver aids, opponent strength, race length, number of competitors and so on.

Many of the criticisms levelled at NASCAR games are valid – it can be mind-numbing – but there is simply nothing like going up against 42 smoking behemoths in front of a crowd of screaming hicks. Cletus, pass me mah helmet...

INPERSPECTIVE

NASCAR RACING 3

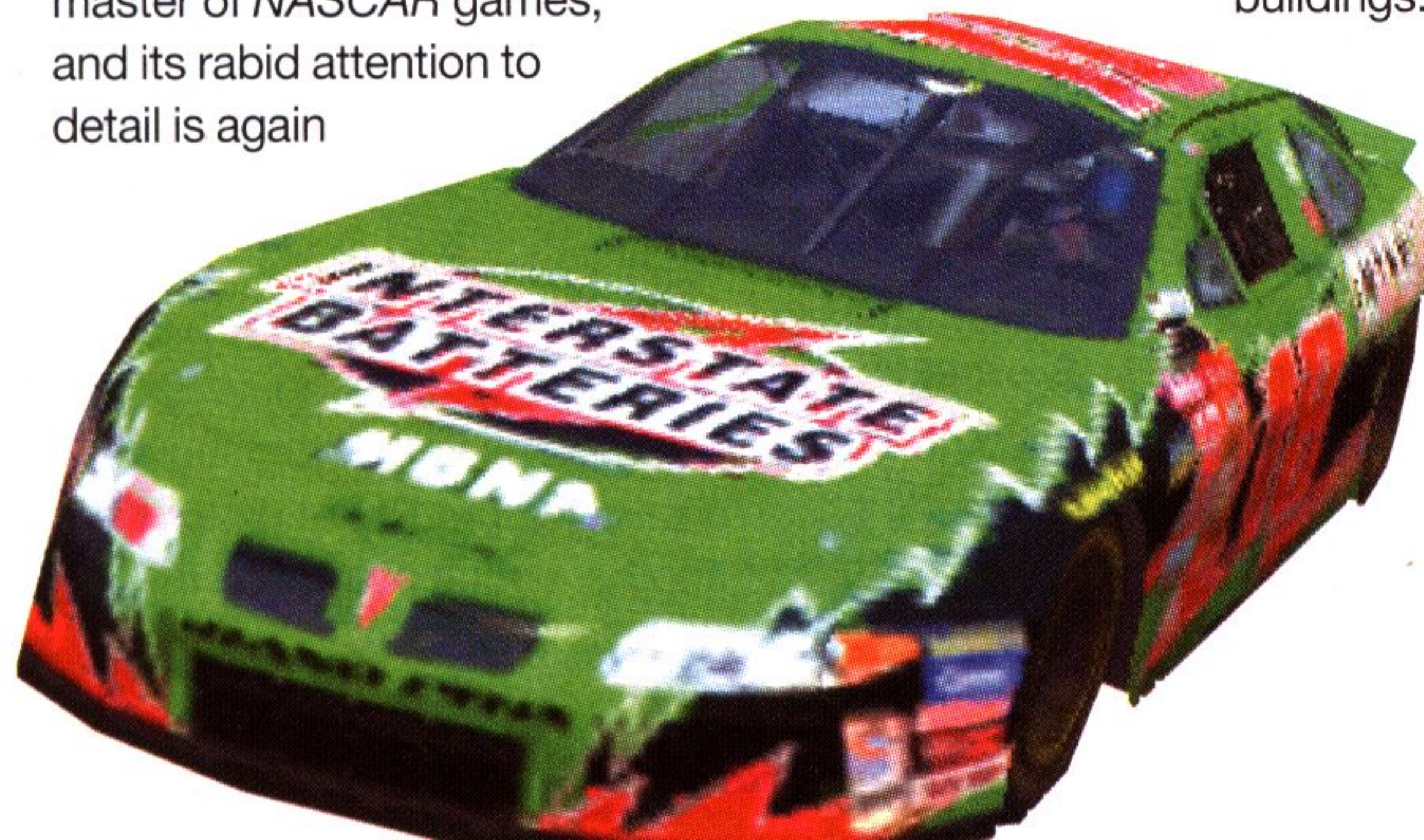
Reviewed Issue 84, 79%

EA's attempt errs more on the side of an arcade game.

GRAND PRIX 3,

Reviewed Issue 94, 80%

For a different kind of boredom.

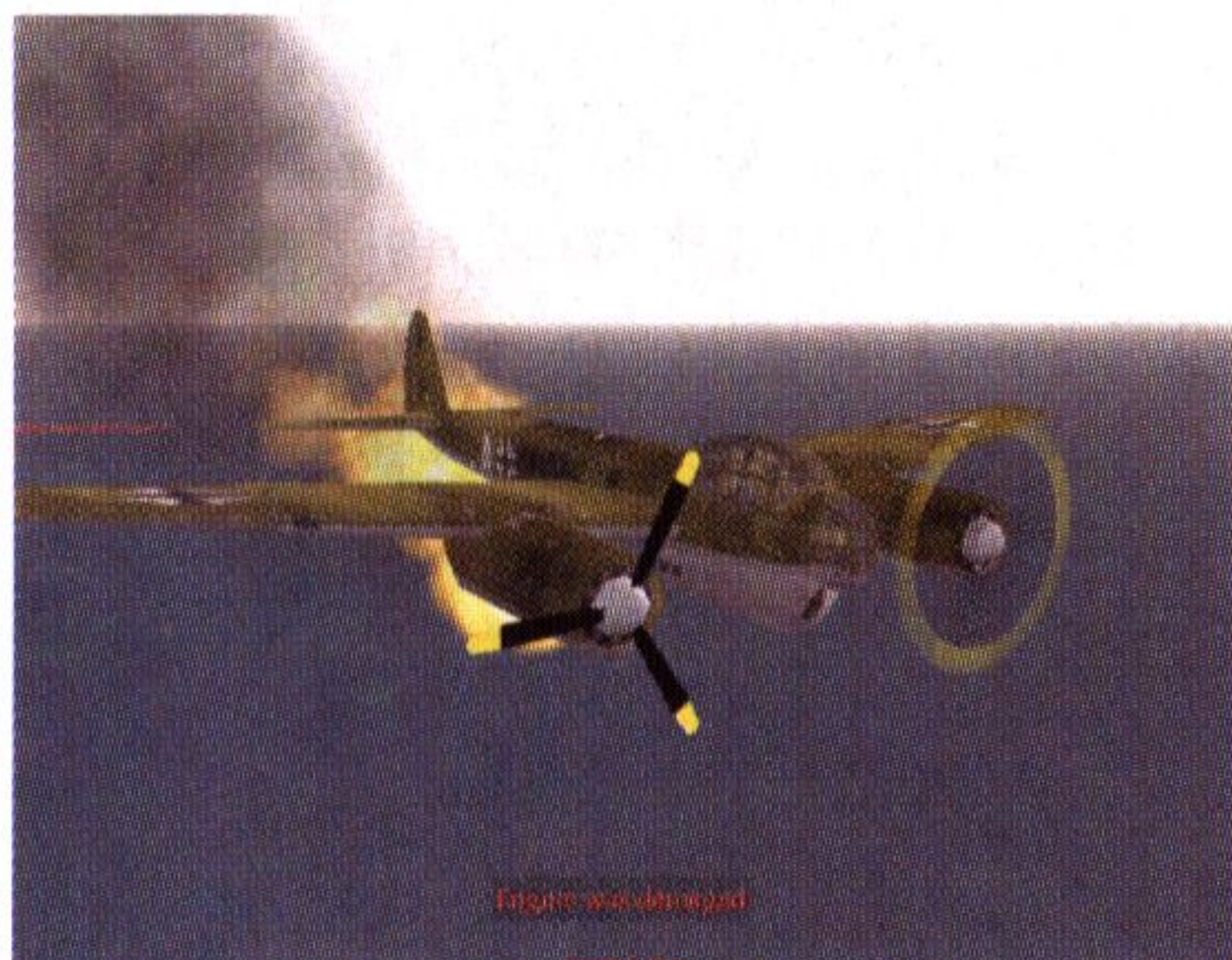


PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Extremely authentic
- ✓ Highly flexible
- ✓ A unique racing experience
- ✗ Gives you a crick neck
- ✗ Can quickly become monotonous

70

Endurance gaming



Up, up and away.



Special effects are pretty good, and planes fall apart pretty convincingly when you start blasting.

JANE'S ATTACK SQUADRON

■ £39.99 | Pub: Xicat Interactive | Dev: Mad Doc | ETA: Out Now | www.xicat.com

REQUIRES PII 400MHz, 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 600MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

The arrival of a new WWII flight sim has **Dave Mathieson** donning his leather cap and waxing his moustache. And we thought he always looked like that

WORLD WAR II

is good subject matter for flight sims, and not just for saddos who never quite shook off their Airfix fixation. The prop planes that battled in their thousands over the skies of Europe were much simpler than today's efforts – meaning less controls to learn. Killing your opponent involved getting in a lot closer than today's 'beyond visual range' encounters – meaning better explosions. But what does *Jane's Attack Squadron* have going for it that we haven't already seen from the likes of *IL-2 Sturmovik* and *Combat Flight Sim 2*?

JAS is set over Western Europe and the blurb on the box contains all the usual guff about the number of flyable aircraft (14) and the number of million square miles of accurately modelled terrain (one... million that is). There are no surprises among the flyable fighters, but a rather cool feature is that you can either fly the bombers, or man the gun and bombardier positions.

THIN ON THE GROUND

The selection of missions is somewhat sparse. In fact, it's very bloody sparse indeed. You get four training missions and a

grand total of five single missions. And that's not five per plane, or even five per airforce. That's five in total. The two campaigns are a source of further action, but it would be a lot simpler if you could just fly the missions separately, since they're just sequences of largely unlinked single missions

"The selection of missions is somewhat sparse. In fact, it's very bloody sparse indeed"

anyway. However, there's a decent quick mission editor, and a much more complete mission editor, which is pretty complicated and unfortunately doesn't come with any instructions. But it will be only a

matter of time before people who are much more arsed than the rest of us figure it out and put their creations up on the Web.

GIVE US EXPLOSIONS

Strange as it may seem, the graphics in *JAS* are its best and worst feature. The effects and plane damage are meaty

enemy planes work pretty hard at sticking to your tail.

It's a shame, but *JAS* seems like something of a missed opportunity. There's enough potential here to produce a very decent game, but the lack of missions and poor plane models smack of a title that's not quite complete. Having said that, it looks like there will be plenty of missions and other mods available to address some of these shortcomings, so here's hoping it evolves into something a lot more polished. **MP**

PCZONE VERDICT

- ✓ Good special effects
- ✓ You get to man different bomber stations
- ✓ The AI is quite smart
- ✗ The plane models are way out of date
- ✗ Poor selection of missions
- ✗ No instruction book for the mission editor.

65

Has potential but it feels unfinished

INPERSPECTIVE

IL-2 STURMOVIK

Reviewed Issue 110, Score 90%

Has the best graphics, plane models and gameplay of any flight sim. A classic.

EUROPEAN AIR WAR

Reviewed Issue 71, Score 87%

A few years old but still going strong largely due to a huge collection of user mods.

WARCOMMANDER

■ £29.99 | Pub: CDV | Dev: Independent Arts | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 450 and 64Mb RAM **DESIRES** PIII 700 and 128Mb RAM

Always the corporal and never the captain, *Richie Shoemaker* finally takes charge of this squad-based strategy game and soon wishes he hadn't



IT'S BEEN a while since the PC enjoyed a decent squad-based strategy game, especially one based during WWII. The hardcore few are well catered for with *Combat Mission* (reviewed last issue), but those hoping for a more focused tactical experience along the lines of *Sudden Strike* are sure to be more than a little disappointed, even though all three games come from the same stable.

Despite pretensions otherwise, *War Commander* is a very shallow game. Placing you in command of up to a few dozen troops, what it adds to the mix by letting you control the odd tank or build command bunkers, watchtowers and field hospitals, it takes away with its dire interface and almost laughable AI. Selecting groups of units is a horrendously complicated

experience, which would be fine if there was a wealth of tactical options to make up for this shortfall, but there isn't apart from the odd special ability like throwing grenades or selecting an aggressive or defensive stance for your troops, there isn't much else they can do. Unfortunately soldiers frequently

throw grenades at their own feet rather than at the enemy, and when you do tell them to run off, they tend to take the longest route rather than the shortest. Worst of all, there are a few occasions where after completing mission objectives, the level refuses to end, which kind of puts a stop to what is

already a laborious advance through enemy territory.

Though many of the bugs will no doubt be resolved with a digital elastoplast, interface aside, the game can never hope to compete with the depth of *Combat Mission*, the tension of the venerable *Close Combat* series, or the sheer fun of

Cannon Fodder. The graphics, though adequate, are confusing, with troops getting lost in the scenery and it's difficult to pick out the right soldier in the heat of battle. But it's not all bad; time passes during each mission so you can push forward when night falls, or hold back if the rain starts. However, this is hardly a justifiable reason to buy what is a substandard game in almost every respect, and though it does try to be a little different in mixing C&C with *X-Com*, we'd rather have a formulaic RTS buffed to a shine than a hackneyed attempt at innovation that is as flawed as it is unfinished. **PCZ**



War Commander is just as dull graphically as it is to play.

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **31**
PoorCommander

MALL TYCOON

■ £9.99 | Pub: Take 2 | Dev: Holistic Design | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb graphics card **DESIRES** PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D graphics card

Keith Pullin gets dragged around some virtual shops

WE'VE PRETTY

much seen it all when it comes to *Tycoon* games, so it's no surprise to find *Mall Tycoon* land in our laps. And likewise it's not entirely surprising to discover it's quite possibly one of the most pointless games to ever pass through the ZONE office.

As the name suggests, *Mall Tycoon* is about constructing a giant shopping centre and getting loads of people to shop there. You can provide them with a variety of stores like toyshops, lingerie outlets, shoe shops and big fat Harrods-type department stores that offer virtually every product you can think of.

The variety of goods is certainly impressive, but unfortunately *Mall Tycoon* is simply not fun in any shape or form. Technically it's fairly robust with a decent 3D engine providing good access to each store and every floor, but when it comes down to it, the game's as



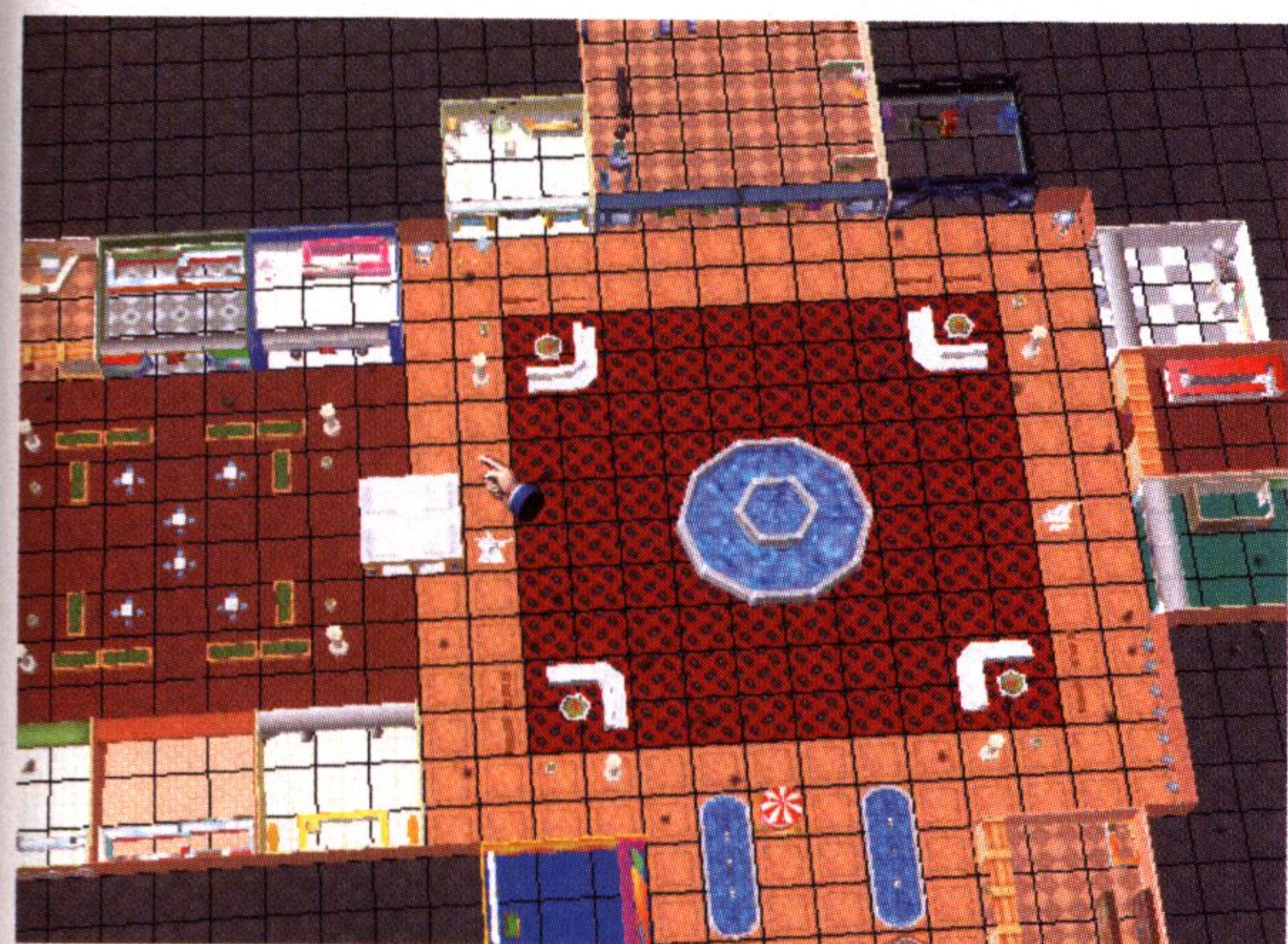
No mall, sorry, shopping centre is complete without a fountain.

shallow as a Sloane on King's Road. There's literally nothing more to *Mall Tycoon* than building stores, making a profit and throwing out punks who hang around the slot machines. OK, there are around 30 scenarios to attempt but they all follow the same basic formula of get X amount of shoppers and earn X amount of profit.

I used to think that being dragged around the ladies

clothing section in Debenhams for an entire Saturday afternoon was tiresome, but if it's a choice between that and playing *Mall Tycoon*, Debenhams would win. Shopping was never fun and it never will be. End of story. **PCZ**

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **38**
Drop while you shop



There's plenty of room for expansion. The question is have you got the inclination?

THE MODSQUAD

Tony Lamb rocks with some of the best mods around



HUD reveals health zones, ammo and mags.



The MP5 is typically effective. And the barrel smokes too.

NAVY SEALS: COVERT OPERATIONS v1.0B

ON THE www.ns-co.net

SIZE 222Mb **REQUIRES** Requires full version of *Quake III*, patched to v1.31

NAVY SEALS has been a long time coming, with teasing screenshots keeping us champing at the bit for months... but it has certainly been worth the wait. This is a top class, fun-filled, adrenaline-fuelled add-on and one of the best realism mods yet. Although

this is its first beta release, this mod looks like it's headed for impressive levels of popularity and technical aplomb.

Navy Seals is a huge undertaking (at nearly 200Mb that's pretty obvious) and it essentially gives you the chance to fight as either a US Navy Seal

– the American special forces equivalent of our own SAS/SBS – or a Tango (special forces parlance for one of the poor mugs the SF wants to shoot). You can customise the appearance of the Seals and Tangos to some extent, although the action happens so fast that

it's most useful for identifying corpses after the event. There should be plenty of those too as the real-world weapons are as effective as they are accurately modelled, and unless you learn to bandage your wounds you'll be joining the list of KIAs all too quickly yourself.

Gameplay options include the familiar deathmatch scenarios, but it also has a mission-based element available. This usually involves an assassination, blowing up a facility or just locating and stealing a briefcase containing secret info. It's wonderfully involved and full of atmosphere, although the maps

need fine-tuning and the Bots wouldn't win a penny on *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* Still, they can be used to pad out games if there's no-one around to play, or to get used to the maps.

Navy Seals is a welcome addition to *Quake III*'s thinly populated library of realism mods, and it's an impressive and enjoyable experience. Plus, with more updates to be added, we're sure it's destined for great things.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

81

Well worth the wait

DESERT CRISIS v1.01

ON THE www.desertcrisis.com

SIZE 106Mb **REQUIRES** Requires full version of *Half-Life*

DESERT CRISIS is an interesting mix of semi-realism team deathmatch mod and sci-fi inspired gib fest, using a blend of modern-day and futuristic weapons in a series of plausible locations. There are three teams in the battle – the United Peace-Keeping Organisation (UKPO), USA and Scourge of the Desert – and you have to choose one to ally with as the three scrap to the death in the quest for true worldwide peace. Each team, of course, is firmly convinced that theirs is the right path.

At the moment only the UKPO and USA are implemented, but it's enough to give you a good flavour of the package.

What sets *Desert Crisis* apart from the raft of other Team Deathmatch mods floating around is its modular objective system that allows map designers to set the teams a series of specific tasks to achieve in order to win. This is very flexible, and a welcome new modding twist. Also of note is the character customisation feature, which can assign a variety of physical



Desert Crisis is one to watch out for and its customisation options are particularly welcome.

characteristics to team members, allowing for quick, visual recognition of allies. This is part of the easy menu-style armour/weapons/

appearance set-up system that helps makes the mod easy to get into.

It's early days for *DC*, but this is an enjoyable start.



**PCZONE
VERDICT**

69

Needs to ripen

SKI PARK MANAGER

■ £24.99 | Pub: Microids | Dev: Lankhor | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM, and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 500, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

It's the closest Keith Pullin's come to a skiing holiday this year



Too many skiers and not enough snow machines can leave the slopes looking bare.

WHAT a curious offering this is. You can't help thinking that Microids would have been better off releasing *Ski Park Manager* during the height of the ski season as opposed to the start of summer; it does after all need all the help it can get.

That's not to say this is an entirely bad game though. Graphically *SPM* might not look up to much, but there is a modicum of strategy involved and it's a little more complex than simply building green, blue, red and black runs and watching the holiday-makers flock.

There are a few factors to consider. Firstly you have to strike the right balance so that everyone from the snowboarders to the cross-country skiers are satisfied. On top of that you have to battle against unpredictable influences such as the weather. If you build your resort too far up

the mountain your jolly winter thrill-seekers run the risk of getting killed by avalanches. If on the other hand you build too far down the mountain, your resort can suffer from a lack of snow. Oh yes, it's canny stuff, but only likely to appeal to the sort of person who has worked in a resort and experienced those kind of problems first-hand.

For the rest of us, *Ski Park Manager* is probably just a little too niche. There's no denying it has its moments and there's a fair amount of strategic depth available, but the fun is short-lived and the inevitable spring thaw is never too far away. **PCZ**

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

55

Tumbling down the mountain

EASTERN THUNDER

■ £19.99 | Pub: Just Flight | Dev: Just Flight | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 400, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card and a copy of *IL-2 Sturmovik* **DESIRES** PIII 600, 256Mb RAM and at least a 32Mb 3D card. Expect problems with a Voodoo chipset

Daniel Emery casts a critical eye over the first unofficial add-on pack to the best flight sim ever



This add-on pack contains four new skins and 25 scenarios.



I hate to spoil the party, but I think you could be in a bit of trouble there.

We've always been a little suspicious of 'unofficial' expansion packs. In extreme cases, shady publishers recompile collections of other people's work (usually off the Internet) and re-sell them as 'The Greatest Doom Collection in the World Ever, Anywhere', or what have you. At the other end of the scale, expansions and mods such as *Counter-Strike*

and *Day Of Defeat* can improve a game tenfold. But mostly, they tend to be overpriced collections of infinitely forgettable stuff you can find elsewhere.

Eastern Thunder, the new *IL-2* expansion from Britsoft publishers Just Flight, is a well-presented package if a little lacking in content. The actual original content on the CD amounts to a rather small

amount of data, containing four skins (no sniggering) that work with the German aircraft and 25 scenarios. So why were we so unimpressed? Well, Just Flight is charging £19.99, when a search on Google reveals sites such as Cpt Farrel's *IL-2 Skins* (<http://www.algonet.se/~hjortsb/il2/>) and *IL-2 Sturmovik* add-ons at (<http://www.sim-outhouse.com/il2/>) with more skins (and

some damn good ones) than you can shake a stick at. The list for scenarios is even longer; and the ones on the Net are all free.

Now we're not slating Just Flight for releasing an add-on pack. It comes with a well-written manual, and it's a professionally put together package. The scenarios are nicely designed, and fairly fun to play. But a product like this should be

retailing for a fiver, not 20 quid. It's verging on daylight robbery, however, if you're a die-hard fan and can turn a blind eye to the over-inflated price, you will find plenty of fun lies within. **PCZ**

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

47

Polished but over-priced

REPLAY

The place to go when you've got no dough



Shogun: still the best RTS in the world, ever.

RTS TRILOGY

■ £29.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | ETA: Out Now

IT'S NOT OFTEN we get a compilation pack of this quality. What we have here is a box filled to bursting point with some of the most sublime strategy games of recent history, including the only recently released *Battle Realms*, which sadly failed to sell anywhere near as many copies as it deserved to. However, the best game in this package is unquestionably *Shogun: Total War*, which still sits proudly at the summit of the strategy category in our A-List. Its breathtaking rolling 3D

landscapes, epic battles, and atmospheric sound draw you into the feudal Japanese setting like no other game, while the turn-based Risk-style troop movement elements offset the game's manic battles perfectly.

In stark contrast, *Battle Realms* charges you with far fewer troops (16 maximum). Like *Shogun*, its tactical landscapes play an integral part in every battle, while the hugely customisable troops offer massive diversity and flexibility. While it may not look as stunning as *Shogun*, its attention to detail is unrivalled, with each troop pulling off stunning looking combos and the ambient fauna adding a great sense of immersion.

The weakest game of the three, but by no means a poor one, is *Settlers IV*. As one of three tribes you must battle against The Dark Tribe, who are intent on turning the world into a barren wilderness. The cutesy graphics detract somewhat from the involved gameplay, and as far as micro-management goes, it's the most detailed of the three games available. If you don't already own any of these games, then at this price, you've got no reason not to rectify that error. It's the best package we've seen since Anna Kournikova last bent down to pick up a tennis ball.

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT

89



Battle Realms and *Settlers IV* complete the package.



Some of the zones in *Lucin* are stunning.



EVERQUEST GOLD PACK

■ £29.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | ETA: Out Now

THIS GOLD edition of Verant's record-breaking online RPG contains *EverQuest* and all the expansions that have been made for the game to date: *Ruins Of Kunark*, *Scars Of Velious* and *Shadows Of Lucin*. While the game itself is an excellent example of its genre, whether the compilation is worth buying or not will depend solely on how up to date you are with the game.

If you don't have EQ at all (or even if you just have the original game, having got it for free from us kindly people at ZONE), go out and buy the *Gold Pack* immediately. If you have the game and you're missing at least two of the expansions, it's still a

bargain buy. Since most of the expansions are now going cheap, if you're only missing one (most likely *Shadows Of Lucin*) you're probably better off shopping around to see if you can get it cheaper than £30.

Regardless, you have to have them all or you will be very restricted as to where you can go in the game: *Ruins Of Kunark* alone is absolutely essential if you want to avoid crowded dungeons from levels 16 to 45. So it's a bargain if you're missing a couple of the expansions, and a dream buy if you don't have the game at all.

Chris Anderson

PCZONE VERDICT

88

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

■ £14.99 | Pub: Activision | ETA: Out Now



This is the third funniest Monkey we've ever seen.

FOR A WHILE there we thought this was going to be the beginning of a renaissance in adventure games, but it's over a year later and all we have to look forward to is a sequel to another LucasArts classic, *Sam & Max*. And even that is being turned into an action/adventure for consoles. It's enough to make you cry.

Escape From Monkey Island on the other hand will make you laugh more than any game released in the last three years. It's not a patch on the first two, of course, but it has enough in-jokes and silly puzzles to keep fans of the series more than happy. It uses the same 3D engine that the far more original *Grim Fandango*

inaugurated and features some great voice acting, but *Escape* suffers from being too uneven and too derivative. If you haven't played the first two titles you'll miss so many references that most of the game won't make sense, but on the flip side, you won't notice that almost every joke and situation is borrowed or recycled from those gems. To make up for it, *Escape* does have a lot of subversive, self-deprecating digs at both George Lucas and its own desperate attempts to be a commercial success. And it's still a great game.

Mark H.

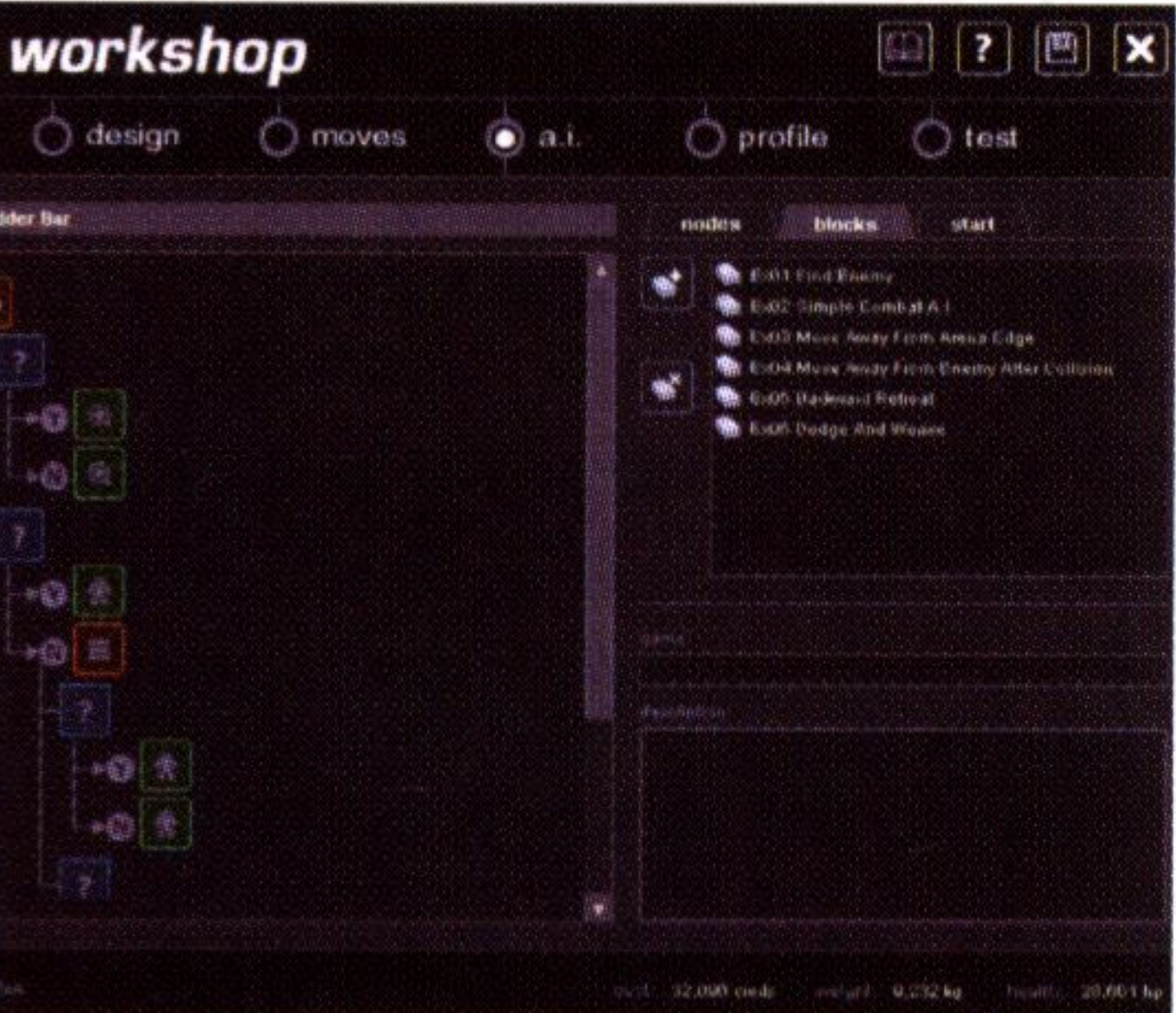
PCZONE VERDICT

82



■ £19.99 | Pub: BTL Publishing | ETA: May 20

DON'T BE fooled by how this one looks. Although *Roboforge* will do its utmost to make you think it was a 1992 SNES game running under emulation, what lies beneath the jagged edges and maniacal colours is a very enjoyable mindbender – a unique and addictive title suitable for anyone with more marbles than the average spray can. The idea behind the game is to design your own robot using a variety of component parts, to bless it with artificial intelligence using the *Roboforge* proprietary programming language, and finally to enter it into a gladiatorial arena where it will attempt



Who needs *Robot Wars* when you have this?

■ £9.99 | Pub: Xplosiv | ETA: Out Now

UNDERRATED BY some (ourselves when we first reviewed it), overrated by others (everyone else), *The Longest Journey* is a rarity in these post-*Tomb Raider* days: a point and click adventure aimed at adults, with a good script, excellent acting and decent puzzles. Your character, April Ryan, might share some of Lara's curves, but she's just a struggling art student in a well thought-out 23rd century setting, and she's been having some strange dreams lately. The story is complex and wants very badly to be called epic, but all you need to know is that there is a parallel world where magic rules and everyone's dialogue has been scripted by Tolkien, and that April can shift between both worlds.

The modern world is much more enjoyable and not nearly so cliché-ridden, though at times it does try way too hard to be 'adult', with a liberal use



of ‘arseholes’, ‘bastards’ and even the occasional ‘f***’. At least the excellent translation from the original Norwegian has been fully localised for the UK, while the classic adventure elements are strong enough to keep all us point and clickers grinning like misty-eyed old fools.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT

81

LEFTOVERS

PLEASE SIR CAN I HAVE SOME MORE SIR?

Not a huge amount at the bottom of the barrel this month. Kicking things off are several *Worm* game variants. *Worms World Party* (Focus, £9.99) is by far the best *Worms* game to date, allowing you to jump online and indulge in a bit of post-pub insect slaughtering. Weapons range from the wacky and zany to the conventional, and while the AI is solid, if a little over accurate, there's still no substitute for playing against a mate (or someone you don't know online if no one likes you). A great game that deserves a great score, (80 per cent). If this sounds like your sort of thing, then check out the *Worms Battle Pack* compilation. A near pointless collection, it seems that someone in their infinite lack of wisdom thought it a good idea to package together the last three *Worms* games and charge us £29.99 for the privilege. Why anyone would want to play *Worms 2* or *Armageddon* when they could play *World Party* is anyone's guess, and for this gross incompetence, the package only deserves 60 per cent. Things unfortunately continue on this downward spiral. *The Airport Inc* and *Fly* compilation pack from Xplosiv (£9.99) is nothing short of abysmal. The former is a management game of patronising proportions, while the other is a vaguely decent flight sim, (50 per cent). Also from Xplosiv comes the bizarre *Fantastic Journey Pinball*, which is thoroughly overpriced at a tenner, (37 per cent). And to finish off on a low point, there's *Myst Trilogy* (£34.99) from Ubi Soft Collector's Edition, which provides three instalments of static-screen adventure mundanity (40 per cent). Roll on next month.



Martin Korda

Constructing robots is a very rewarding experience.

to destroy a number of odd-looking opponents. Once you're satisfied you have your very own Terminator alive and well on your hard drive, go online and you'll be able to fight other people's monsters.

The first release was only available direct from Kiwi developer Liquid Edge Games, but now that BTL Publishing has put *Roboforge* onto CD-ROM it comes with a nice manual, an improved context-sensitive help system, a greater variety of robots to battle, plus a few nips and tucks to give it broader appeal (the original was, in retrospect, a little too nichey for its own good). What hasn't changed is the fascination you get from watching robots develop – from skeleton frames to intelligent automatons that owe their existence and behaviour patterns to you and no other. Aside from CogniToy's *MindRover*, we can't think of another PC title that manages to venture so far from the mainstream yet remain so approachable. Two thumbs up.

Phil Wand

PCZONE VERDICT

83

UPDATES

A place for single-player redemption and multiplayer action

MULTIPLE CHANCES

What's all this about then?

Some PC games are exceptionally flaky on release, with bugs and omissions that are subsequently fixed over time with patches. When this happens we'll take another look and see if the score is worth upping. By the same token, massively multiplayer games are ever-evolving and because of this we'll be revisiting major releases to see what's changed over time. This is also the place where we take a proper look at the multiplayer side of games. As we regularly review games before they go on sale, often there are no public servers up and running, so instead of telling you how we think the game is going to play we'll wait and do a proper multiplayer review here, outlining how many servers are up and how the game plays online.

"Though the team games are rather stolid, the deathmatch mode is fantastic fun"

JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

■ £34.99 | Pub: Activision | Dev: Raven | ETA: Out Now |
www.lucasarts.com | Players: 2-16

REQUIRES PIII 450, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card and a 56K modem **DESIRES** PIII 600, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and a high-speed Internet connection

Having finished the single-player campaign for last month's review, Richie Shoemaker takes on some real opponents online

THERE IS an unwritten rule in game design that goes if you are making a first-person shooter you must include some sort of multiplayer component. It's a law most stick to, even the duff games, where you can reliably expect the regular spread of deathmatch missions, capture-the-flag levels and variants thereof. In that respect *Jedi Knight 2* doesn't disappoint, but as was shown in *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, it pays to go the extra mile. If Raven had taken a leaf out of *Counter-Strike*'s book, we might have been able to enjoy some great tactical team-based action, with Rebel forces and Imperial Stormtroopers fighting across icy plains, one trying to wrest control of a couple of protocol

droids from the other, or rescuing secret Death Star plans. Unfortunately until some enterprising young scamp starts work on a mod, or more likely, LucasArts announces an expansion pack, the only teamplay you get in *JK2* is capture the flag/lizard, which is nothing to write home about. More's the pity.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT Fortunately, though the team games are rather stolid, the trusty deathmatch mode is fantastic fun. About as

fashionable as dungarees these days, deathmatch is where *JK2*'s online game really shines. This is partly due to the duelling nature of lightsaber combat, but more down to the fact that there are a couple of excellent levels perfectly suited to the melee of all-for-one conflict.

As with the single-player game, the weapons still feel rather detached from the *Star Wars* universe. Whereas in single-player the weapons lack purpose, there is at least some fun to be had launching explosives into a packed

of course. Moreover there are no less than seven extra Force powers open to multiplayers – two apiece for Light and Dark sides, one neutral and a couple of team Force powers. Other neat features are a couple of Quad-style power-ups and a wall-like shield you can drop behind you to trap any pursuers

COUNTER-STRUCK

Being *Quake III*-powered, *JK2* benefits from having a perfectly intuitive interface; setting up, finding and joining servers is a breeze and though the game is just about playable using a 56K modem, broadband is invariably best, especially since the game's third-person view is a little more graphically demanding than a typical first-person game like *Q3*.

The best games are those where lightsaber and Force powers are mandatory, set across urban levels offering plenty of gaping chasms for Jedis to fall into. There's bound to be plenty of new maps appearing, but for now there is plenty to be getting on with. Had there been a decent stab at recreating the *Counter-Strike* or *Team Fortress* experience in the *Star Wars* setting – or at least a teamplay mode to rival *Wolfenstein's* or *Medal Of Honor's* – then *JK2*'s online game would be unrivalled. As it is it remains only a great deathmatch game, which is no bad thing at all. **EW**

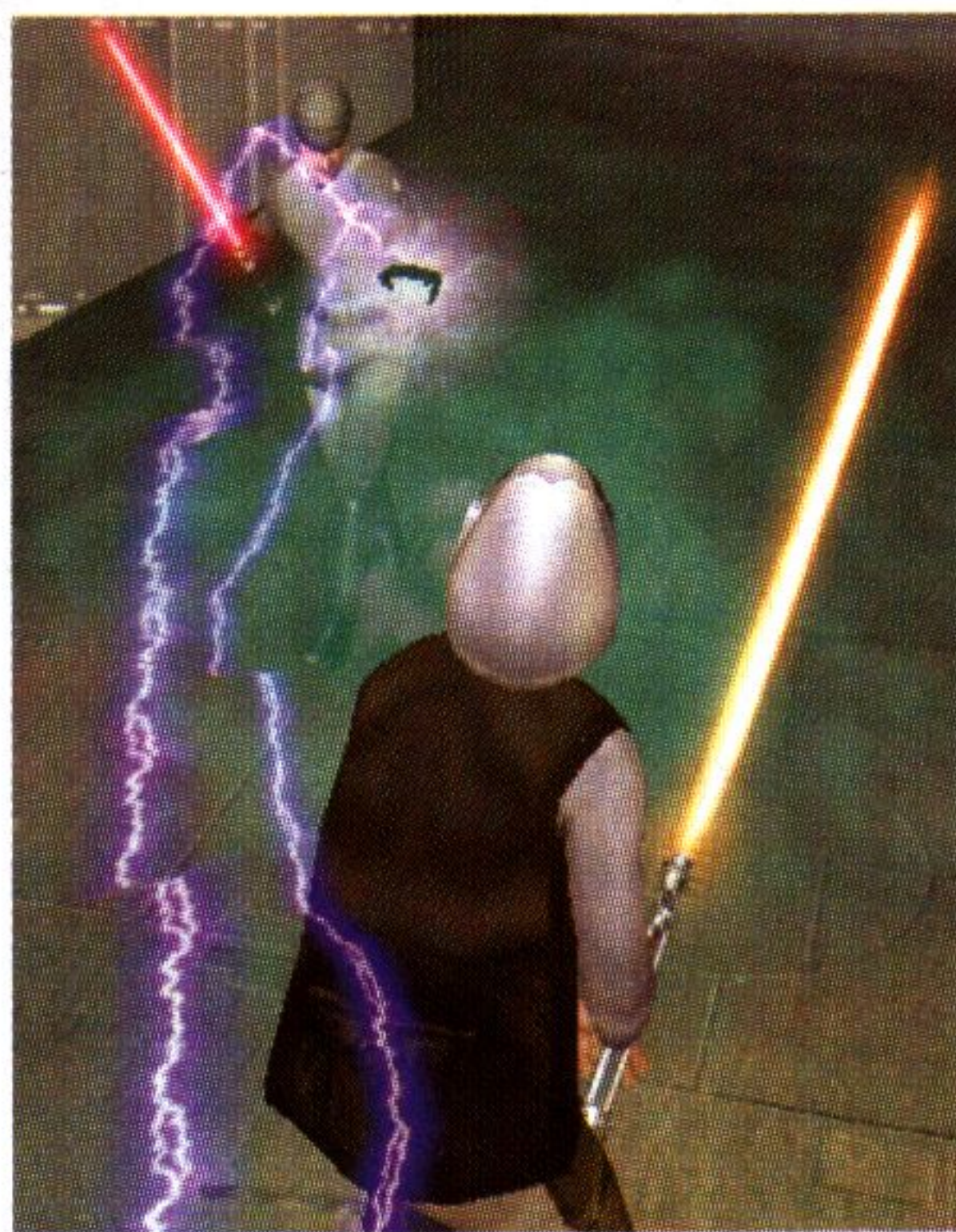
It is just like the bloody Cirque de Soleil.



Capture The Flag is a bit poo.

corridor of duelling Jedis in order to poach a few kills (even if it is a rather dishonourable practice).

But most of all it is the option of being able to configure your Force powers that really distinguishes *JK2*'s multiplayer experience from its inconsistent solo game – aside from the benefit of ripping through real opponents compared to the game's all-too-easy AI enemies,



PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 115) **91**

MULTIPLAYER SCORE **88**

Average team game, sublime deathmatch

COMMAND AND CONQUER: RENEGADE MULTIPLAYER

■ £29.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: Westwood Studios | ETA: Out Now | www.westwood.ea.com | Players: 2-32

REQUIRES PII 200 MMX, 32Mb RAM, 2Mb 3D card and a 56K modem **DESIRES** PIII 600, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card and an ADSL connection

After a disappointing single-player game, Martin Korda sees if Westwood's first FPS outing can redeem itself online

AS STINKERS go, *Renegade's* single-player game is right up there with a cabbage and baked bean vindaloo follow-through. One of our main gripes about it was its AI. Or lack of it, like jeeps following an identical

oval path in a vain attempt to run you over. Unforgivable. However, take out the AI and throw in some live bait, and these criticisms get defenestrated faster than an extra in an old-skool Western. And believe it

or not, once you've filed your nails down to a set of useless carbon stumps waiting for one of several hundred packed-to-bursting-point servers to load, you'll find that under the glitches lies a highly entertaining multiplayer lark.

Renegade is certainly one of the most popular new online FPSs for a while, and its class-

based similarities to TFC is obviously capturing the imagination of fraggers the world over. And after a few minutes it's easy to see why. Choosing one of two sides (NOD or GDI), you must defend your base while trying to take out the enemy's. However, rather than a basic CTF principle, you actually have to take out key buildings (Runways, Weapon Factories etc), just like in a C&C RTS.

During each round you earn credits for kills, which can then be cashed in for a multitude of character upgrades (engineer, heavy gunner, sniper etc) or used to buy vehicles which you can hop into and drive (including Mammoth Tanks). Sadly, though, many of these are infuriatingly hard to manoeuvre. Things aren't

helped by some atrocious lag (even with an ADSL connection) and severe clipping problems. Patches are needed, and fast.

If you're going to buy *Renegade*, then make sure it's for the multiplayer game. As a team game it works extremely well and its already massive fan-base guarantees an abundance of servers all day long. Don't expect to be enthralled, but do expect to be entertained. **PCZ**



Ever seen a plane give birth to a car? You have now.



PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 113) **73**

MULTIPLAYER SCORE **79**

Glitched but entertaining online fragging romp

WARRIOR KINGS MULTIPLAYER

■ £29.99 | Pub: Microids | Dev: Black Cactus | ETA: Out Now | www.blackcactus.com | Players: 1-8

REQUIRES PII 350, 128Mb RAM, 8Mb 3D graphics card and a 56K modem **DESIRES** PIII 700, 256Mb RAM, 16Mb graphics card and an ADSL connection

Keith Pullin finds an online RTS experience unfit for warriors or kings

A GREAT single-player game doesn't necessarily convert into a great multiplayer game, and in *Warrior Kings* we have a fine example. It is a shame really, because with around 30 maps and an exquisite emphasis on using the contours of the battlefield to your advantage *WK* could have been a classic online experience. Alas, events have conspired to rob us of that.

Problem one is that it's a slowish game at the best of times and when you throw a 56K modem into the equation, gameplay tends to lag to the point where you're not even sure if your units are still alive. In fact, there are huge similarities with *Black & White* in this respect – the only difference being that *B&W* still manages to retain a modicum of good humour and

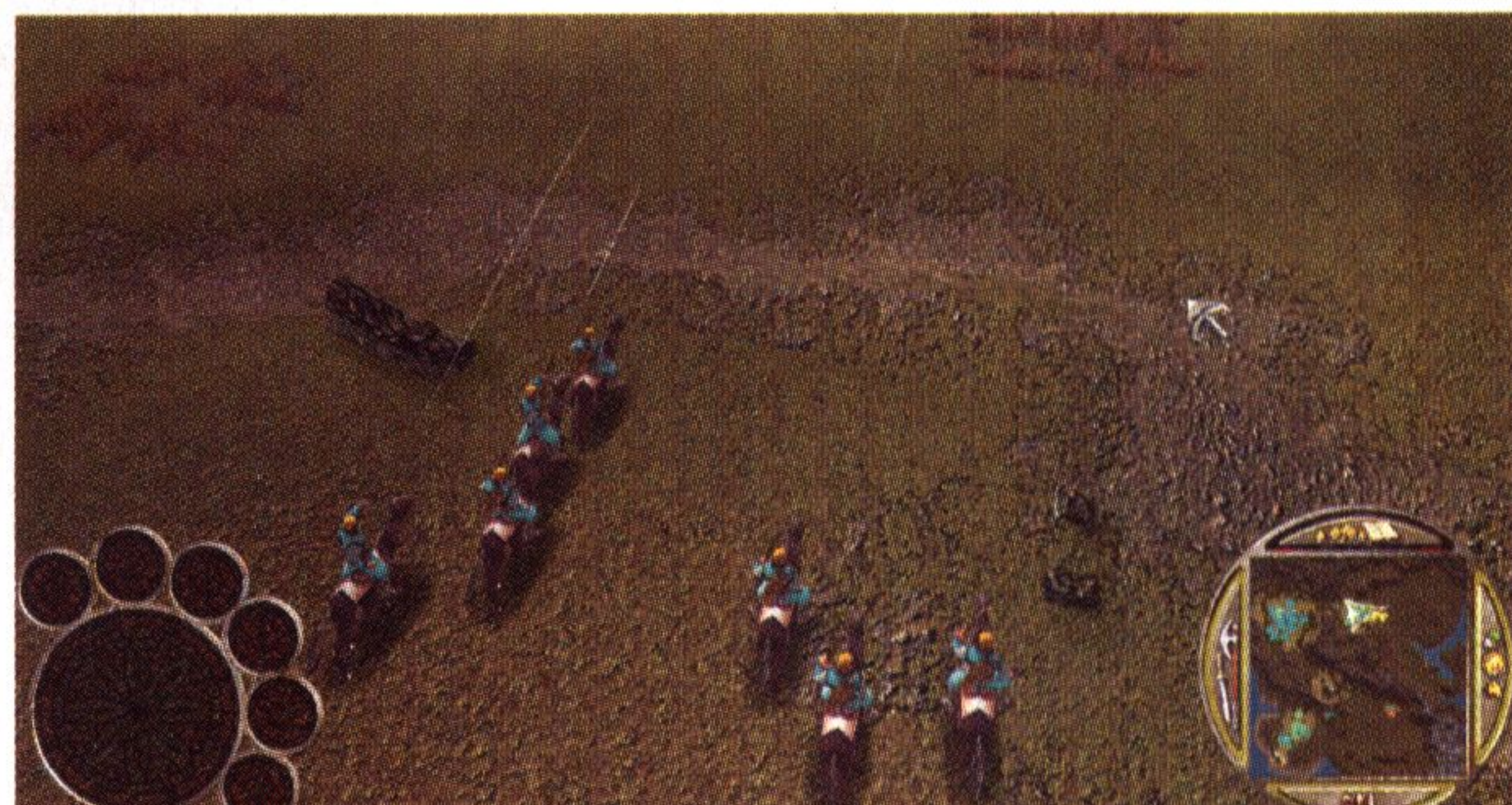
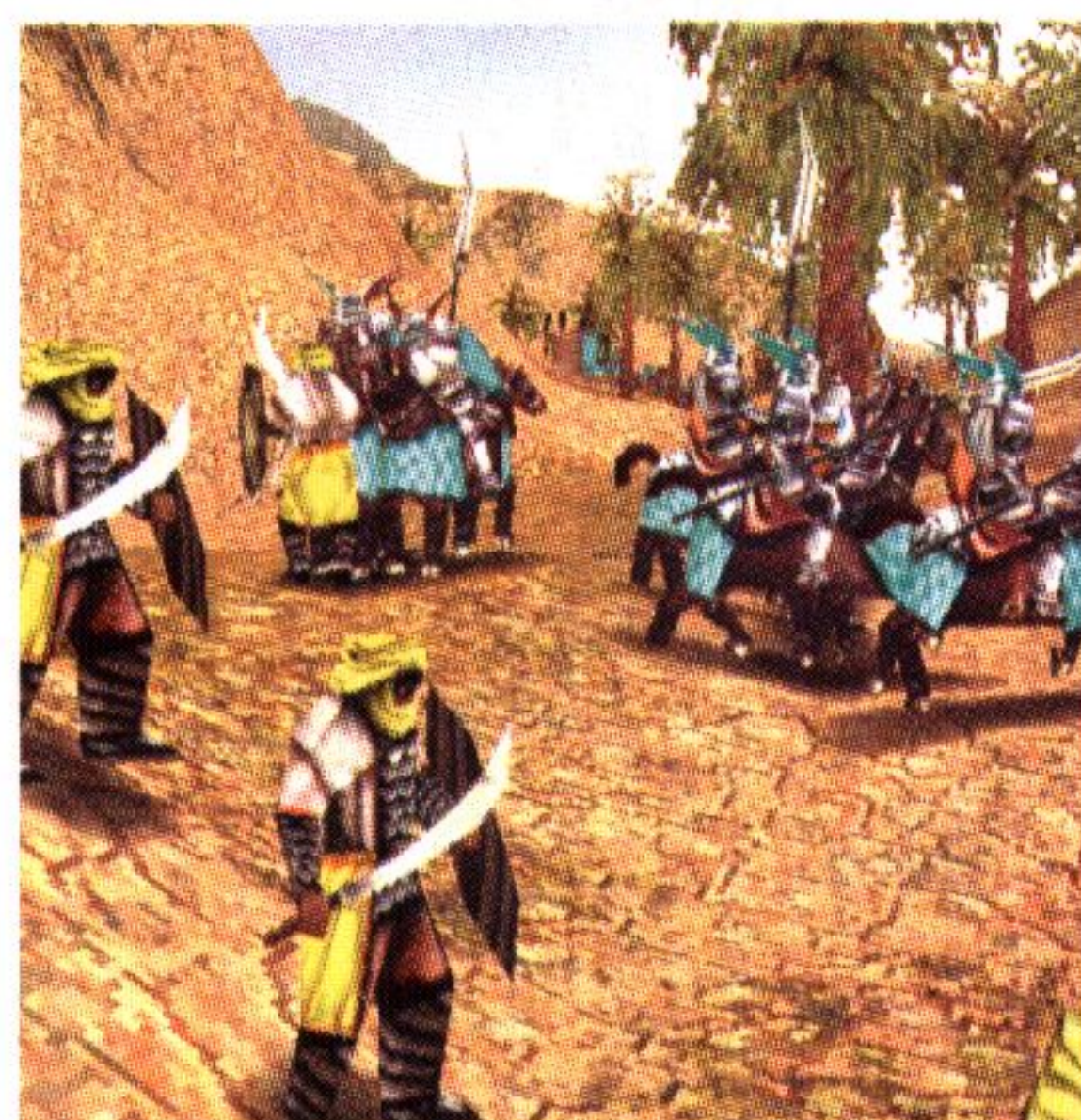
enjoyment, owing to the fact that your creature has the ability to think and act by itself.

Unfortunately *Warrior Kings* has no such trump card, indeed most of the units are so small and become so easily lost due to some spectacularly poor AI, your biggest challenge is finding them again before the program executes one of its many fatal crashes.

Locating other willing opponents is also a bit of a problem. During peak-time there only seemed to be around a

dozen or so people in the lobby and most of those seemed strangely preoccupied with their RAM and were reluctant to play.

Hopefully the population will improve over time and maybe then we'll start to see some action. But still, whatever you do, don't go near *Warrior Kings* with anything less than a high-speed connection – otherwise it's just plain suicide. **PCZ**



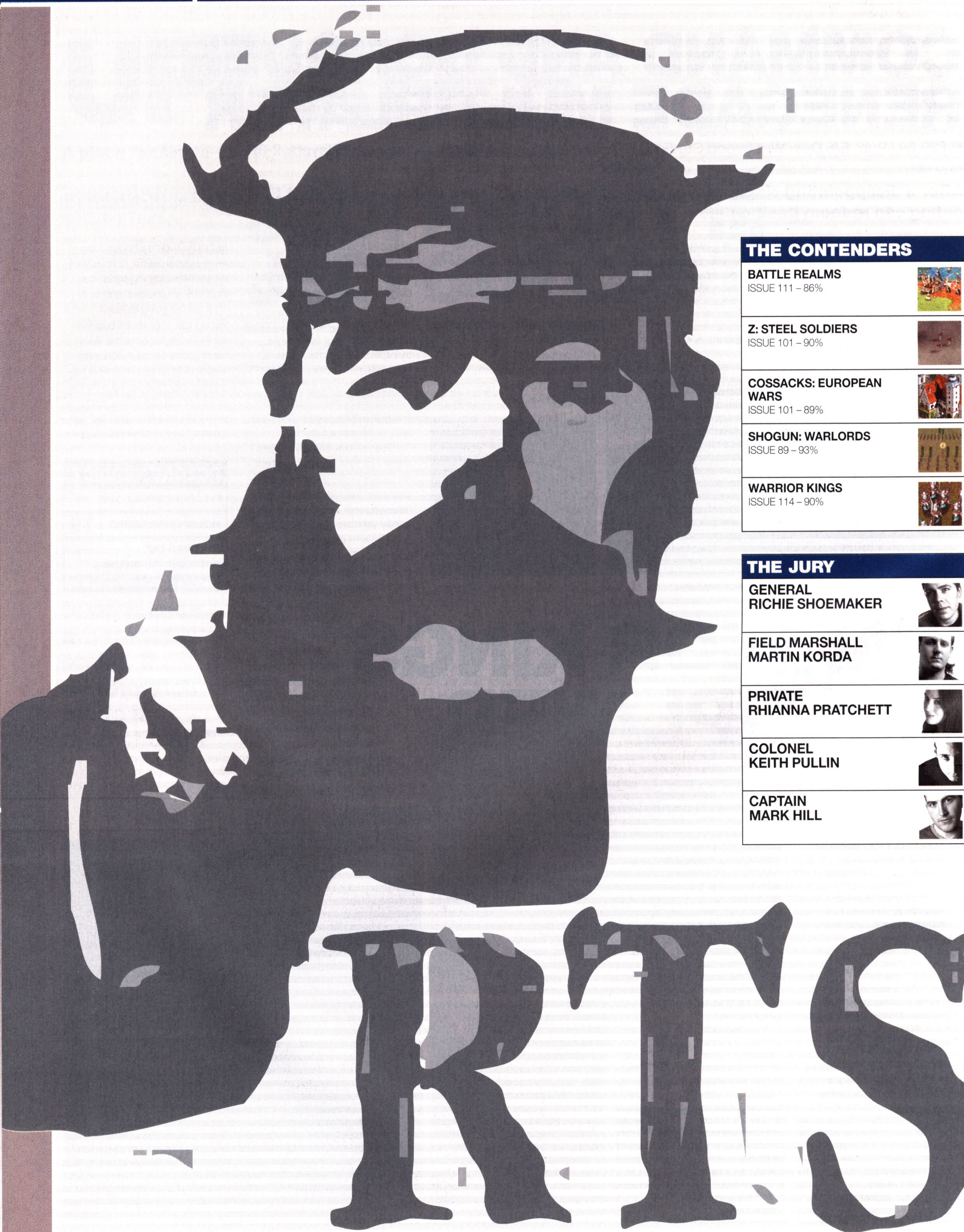
Sadly, serious lag and too many glitches spoil the *Warrior Kings* experience online.

PCZONE VERDICT

FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 114) **90**

MULTIPLAYER SCORE **68**

Needs some serious patching



RTS

THE CONTENDERS

BATTLE REALMS
ISSUE 111 - 86%



Z: STEEL SOLDIERS
ISSUE 101 - 90%



COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS
ISSUE 101 - 89%



SHOGUN: WARLORDS
ISSUE 89 - 93%



WARRIOR KINGS
ISSUE 114 - 90%



THE JURY

GENERAL
RICHIE SHOEMAKER



FIELD MARSHALL
MARTIN KORDA



PRIVATE
RHIANNA PRATCHETT



COLONEL
KEITH PULLIN



CAPTAIN
MARK HILL



REAL-TIME STRATEGY SUPERTEST

The **ZONE** team sits down to discuss real-time strategy, but **Mark Hill** makes sure everyone takes turns

THE RTS GENRE is one of the few to consistently provide excellent games. Proof of this is that we had to leave out some brilliant titles (*Sudden Strike* among them) and concentrate on the very best. But while we thoroughly recommend every game included here, that doesn't mean we're going to pull any punches when it comes to discussing their strengths and weaknesses. So if you want to find out which strategy game is for you, read on.

Mark: Has anyone else noticed that three of these games are British?

All: (*Caveman-cheers and patriotic fists in the air*) Yeeeeahhh.

Mark: So, is Britain the leading strategy developer in the world?

Richie: Yep.

Martin: But if you look at the German market (which is huge), the biggest games there are not British. They love micromanagement, so *Shogun* didn't make a dent but was huge. If you asked them if Britain was leading the RTS genre they'd give you a completely different answer to people here.

Keith: I think developers here tend to create a world that gives you a feeling there's stuff going on around you.

Martin: They're more involving without getting anal about things.

Mark: Let's start with the latest one then.

WARRIOR KINGS

Keith: I have to say, I know we gave it a very good score and I think the game is excellent, but it seriously needs patching. There are so many problems, so many bugs, the load times are ridiculous.

Mark: It takes forever to load up a level.

Keith: Do you remember when *SiN* first came out, it took absolutely ages to load? Well, you could say it's a sin.

All: (*Laughs and groans in equal measure*)

Martin: I agree with you, it does need patching very badly.

Richie: And it's really slow too. Just moving your mouse across the map takes forever.

Mark: I thought my machine had gone back five years it was so slow. Even with the detail on really low.

Richie: Mine did go back five years, straight to DOS.

Martin: I didn't find any slow-down at all.

Rhianna: It wasn't slow on my machine either.

Martin: But apart from that, the game is great because it tries to do something different. The whole 3D world, the characters, the story.

Richie: The use of the terrain is fantastic. There are others here that use it tactically, but it's the way your men slow down when they go up a hill and small details like that which do it for me.

Keith: It is amazing how the archers have pinpoint accuracy firing through trees though.

Martin: That's another thing that needs to be addressed in a patch. The line of sight is very dodgy.

Richie: It's quite good fun in multiplayer, apart from the slow down. And that was on LAN.

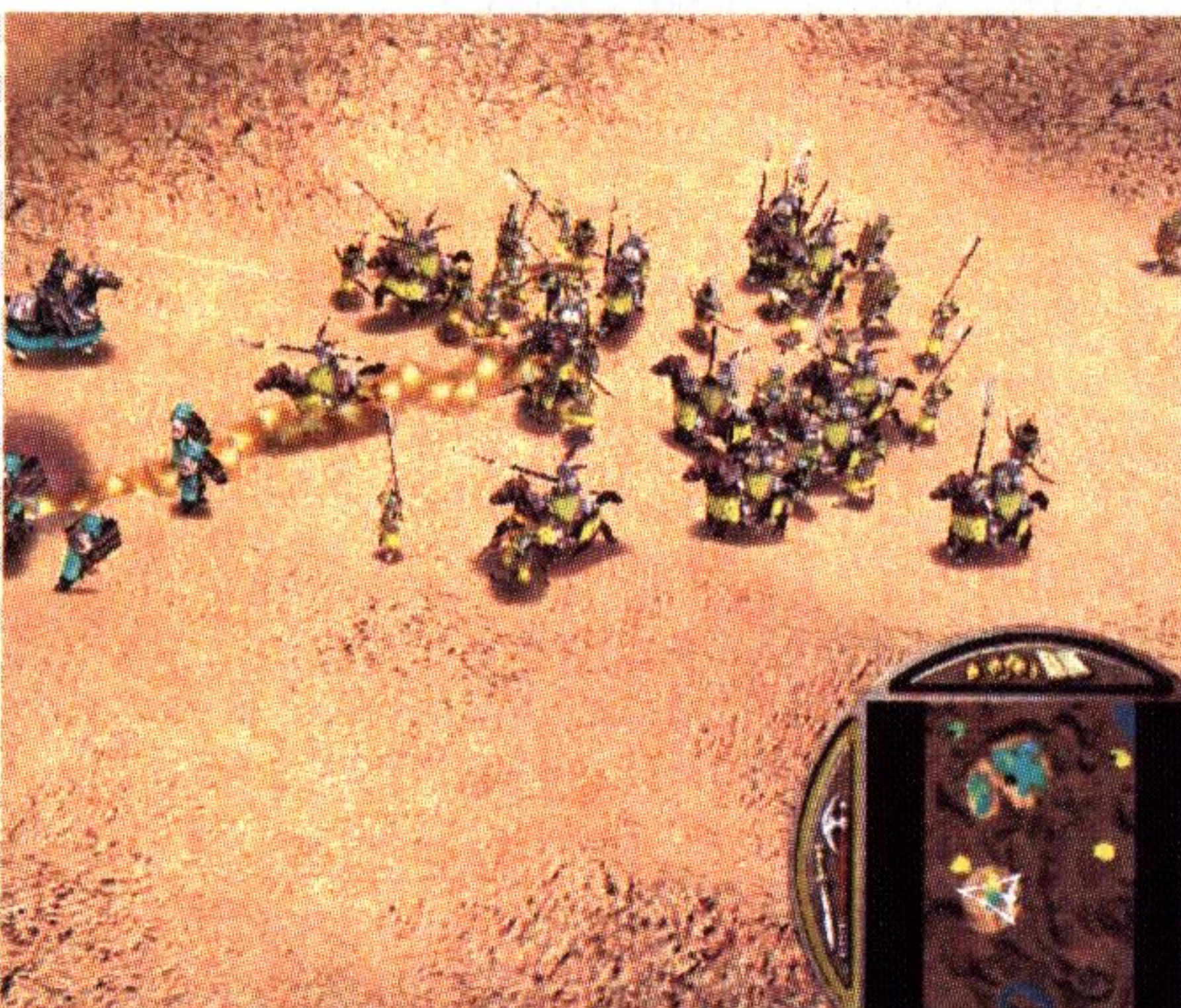
Mark: I didn't think the whole game was very user-friendly. I'm

not a big strategy player and I found the tutorials a bit useless, but my biggest problem was with the camera. I find 3D strategies hard work at the

best of times, but this one was just impossible.

Martin: I thought the 3D aspect was great.

Keith: But the camera is a mess.



It has a great story, but *Warrior Kings* is in desperate need of patching.

You can only tilt up and down after you've selected it in an option screen.

Martin: It took four or five hours to get used to it, but after that I loved it.

Richie: It gives you too much control of the camera though. Something like *Z* can be played from the same perspective even if you have the option to zoom about, but *Warrior Kings* makes you use the camera too much.

Rhianna: I think it has the worst 3D camera to control, and it didn't adjust to the terrain as you scrolled along.

Mark: The main thing for me is that it has a proper story with proper characters and dialogue, which you don't get in RTSs. But for me there was too much micromanagement getting in the way of it.

Martin: And it's a branching story too. Different decisions lead you down very different paths. It has a very high replayability factor.

Richie: But the first thing you want to do in an RTS is take a look at all your units and because there's no skirmish mode you have to wait to get them all.

Keith: And it takes ages to get good units.

Martin: There are lots of tactics you can use. Like using a spy to set fire to farms, which stops the enemy collecting resources

while they put the fire out.

Richie: Apart from the need to patch it, it's a great game. Like all the rest here.

BATTLE REALMS

Martin: *Battle Realms* also places a big emphasis on terrain advantage, but it concentrates on smaller groups of soldiers, making it more tactical than *Warrior Kings*.

Mark: I found this the most enjoyable game of the lot. You can just get on with things straight away. There's resource management but you can set it up very quickly and concentrate on training units and fighting people, which is the real meat of the game. And the animation is fantastic.

Martin: The training of units is quite a big area of the game. Particularly the way you can create so many different types of units just by combining training methods.

Mark: I like the fact that it's not 3D, because 3D strategies give me a headache, but I would have liked to have been able to zoom out and see more of the map. Tilting the camera a bit isn't that useful.

Keith: It's my second favourite here. Like Mark said, it's very easy to get into and it makes the best use of the landscape out of any game here. Like when enemy troops march through the



It has some of the biggest battles, but it's the economic aspect that makes *Cossacks* so good.

forest, birds flutter out and squirrels scamper away, so you know something is going on. It's a very seamless, polished game.

Mark: I did find that there was very little strategy involved in the actual fights. When two armies meet it's just a bloody orgy of

looks great from the normal camera angle.

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

Richie: This was a game I really, really wanted to love. Apart from the fact that it is a blatant rip-off

"You can just get on with things straight away"

MARK ON BATTLE REALMS

clashing bodies. There's no sense of control.

Richie: It's not really strategic in that sense. The strategy comes more from how you build your army and how you approach the enemy.

Mark: It's very much a build and rush game too. I like to take my time building an army but when I get to the enemy I find he's built one twice as big.

Keith: There is a lot of that, but the way you use the terrain to your advantage is important too. You have to think about the elevation.

Rhianna: I liked the whole Ying/Yang points idea. They're important when upgrading your units and you only get them through fighting, so you can't just wall yourself in. I'd find myself sacrificing units just to get the points from a fight.

Mark: And unlike *Warrior Kings* it has a fantastic skirmish mode.

Keith: It was made for skirmish.

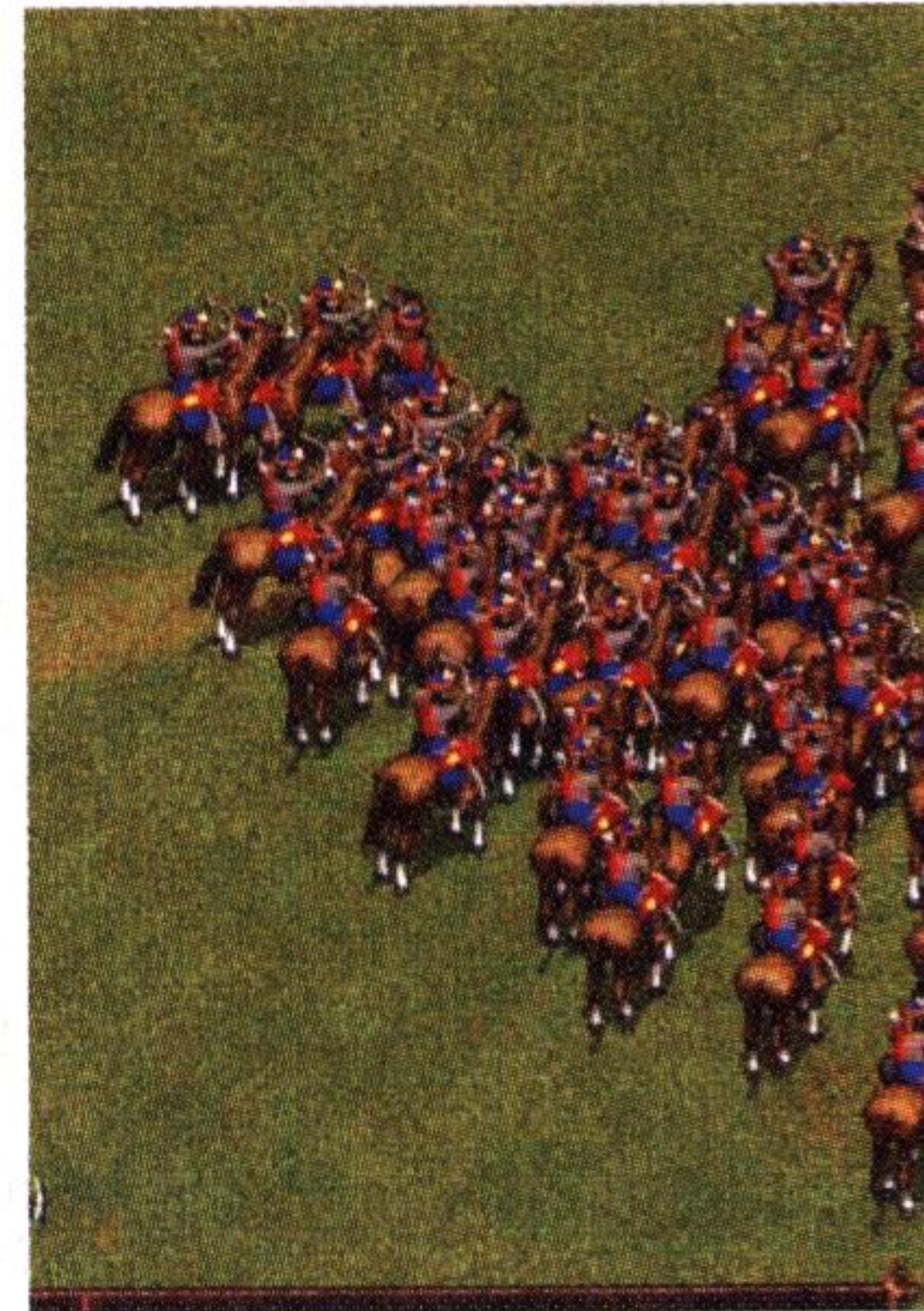
Mark: Each clan has so many units that are so different from the ones you use in the single-player game that you actually want to play skirmishes against the AI. I liked the whole fantasy story too. It's more like an old gamebook than *Warrior Kings* is.

Richie: It's probably the best looking game of the lot too.

Martin: No way. It looks like it's two years old.

Keith: How can you say that? The animation is just fantastic.

Richie: The graphics look ropery in the cut-scenes, which probably show why the game doesn't let you zoom in. But it



to control and you have to spend a lot of time scrolling to find your units. And with the add-on pack the battles are even bigger, just stupidly huge.

Martin: This is the ugliest game here by a considerable margin.

Keith: War is ugly.

Martin: Especially when there are loads of people on the screen, it just looks like a big messy blob.

Rhianna: It's just a different style of graphics.

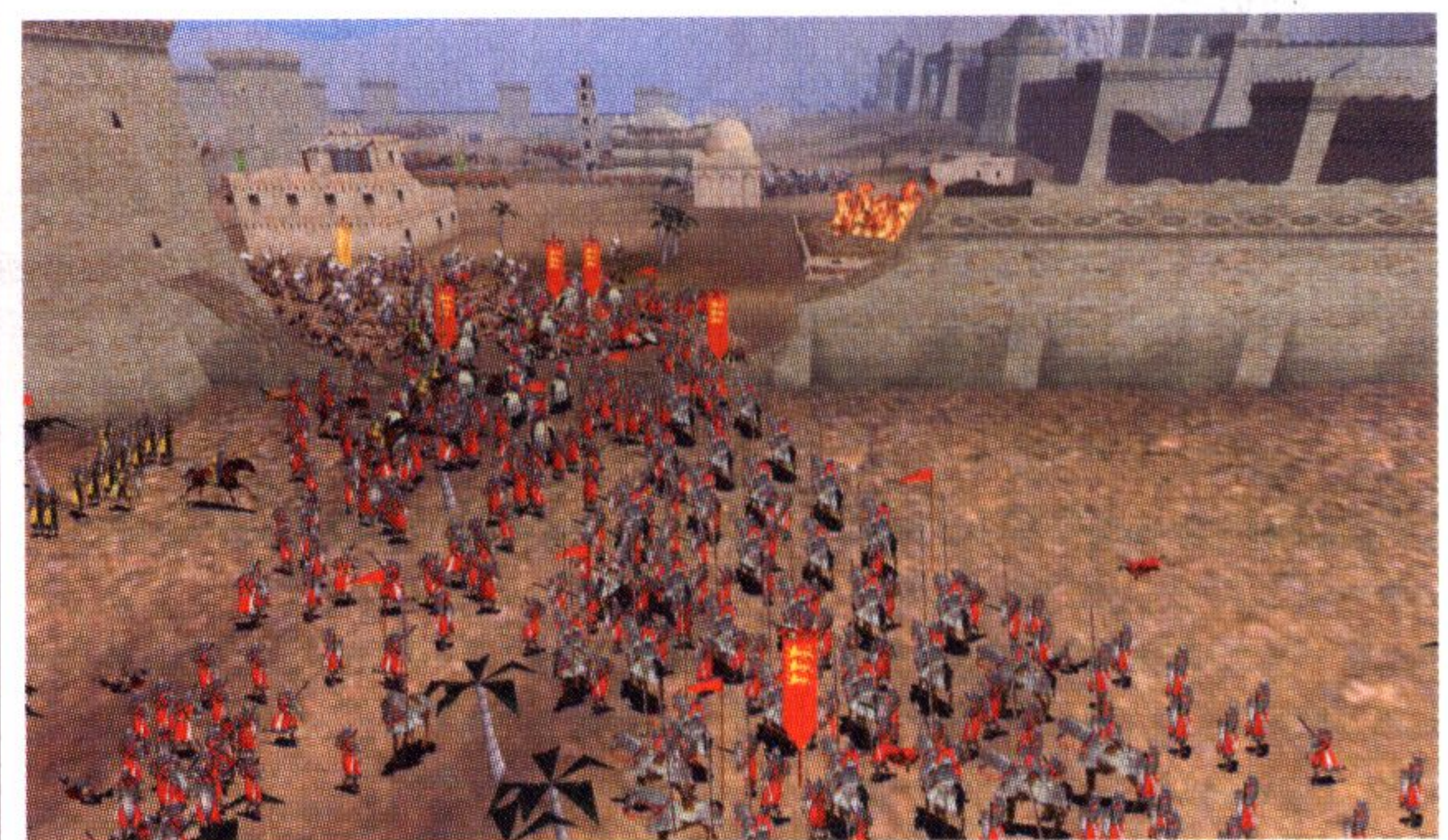
Richie: It's the only one here that isn't 3D accelerated. But it doesn't look that bad.

Mark: The units do look a bit amateurish, but the buildings look really good.

Rhianna: The buildings are beautiful, especially the way

STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

FORGET ABOUT PEACE, THIS YEAR IS FULL OF WAR



There are so many big, anticipated RTS titles in the pipeline that it makes you wonder just how much easier they are to develop than first-person shooters, the supposedly biggest PC genre. Try telling that to Blizzard though, who've been labouring over *Warcraft III* for three years. It should be out very shortly though and is certain to be an instant blockbuster.

The sequel to *Shogun, Medieval: Total War* is also nearly complete, in fact there's a preview on page 58 which tells you all about it. It certainly looks set to improve on every aspect of *Shogun*, so it's bound to be another

scorcher. Other sequels include the follow-up to the brilliant *Sudden Strike* and *Age Of Mythology*, the sequel to what is arguably the biggest of all strategy series, (although Westwood might have something to say about that especially with *C&C: Generals* on the way.)

Another big title on the way looks dangerously like an *Age Of Empires* clone, but *Rise Of Nations* is set to carry many Sid Meier influences, so it should have plenty of tricks up its sleeve. As should *Praetorians*, from *Commandos* developer Pyro. Yep, this year's strategy crop looks plentiful indeed.



Great fun and very easy to get into, *Battle Realms* also has some fantastic battle animations.



There is a range of different architecture in *Cossacks*.

they're destroyed.

Mark: And the way they're built as well. It's really detailed.

Rhianna: The best thing is the way the economy and the military are intrinsically linked. You have to build up your economy not just to create the units but also to sustain a war. You need to have gold in reserve to pay your mercenaries. If you run out in the middle of a battle they'll desert you or even defect to the other side. And the way you can take over enemy buildings just by being near them is quite important too.

Mark: I just found that annoying, particularly when my peasants turned to the other side without me even knowing about it.

Rhianna: It's annoying when someone does it to you, but great if you're the one taking them over. It's a great multiplayer game too. It can be very fast because you can create units easily, or very long if you allow someone to wall themselves in, as they can stay there forever. It's not like *Battle Realms* where you have to go out and fight. Walling in is the second most annoying thing in RTSs after rushing.

Richie: I love walling in. Just sit back and relax. Like in *Warrior Kings*, I was quite happily designing a nice village and then this big bloody demon comes along and destroys it all.

Mark: I think with *Cossacks* you want to spend time building because it looks a bit like *Caesar* in that respect. But what does that archbishop do?

Rhianna: He heals people.

Keith: He probably fiddles with small children.

Martin: One good thing it has though, is that you can't bring down a castle with just one man hitting it with a stick like you could in *Age Of Empires*.

Richie: But it's still a rip off. I'm surprised Microsoft didn't sue.

Rhianna: No it's not. It has an innovative way of linking the economy with the military. It has the best use of economy here.

Mark: It's a rip off. Next!

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

Richie: I didn't like the original Z at all, but I loved this one.

Keith: And you were right to love it.

Richie: The first missions aren't amazing, but it gets hold of you after a while. You get to like the characters and the cut-scenes.

Martin: I thought the cut-scenes were particularly tedious and unfunny.

Richie: Well, they're not hilarious...

Mark: I thought they were really good. Best thing about it in fact. But they completely clashed with the gameplay itself.

Martin: That's because they're crap.

All: Nooooooooo!

Keith: It's the only game here that actually has some humour in it.

Mark: Exactly, it's great that it doesn't take itself too seriously.

Martin: (*Shattering eardrums everywhere*) I want guts, I want

blood. War isn't funny.

Mark: It is when it's a bunch of dumb robots fighting it. But it didn't sell very well, did it?

Martin: It sold like a pig.

Mark: Eon (the publisher) actually went bust shortly afterwards.

Richie: It was really annoying because we reviewed the game and then it was months before they released it. They kept putting it back so it wouldn't clash with *Black & White*. And in the end that's exactly what happened. They should have released it when it was done. It's a very action-oriented strategy game that should have appealed to a lot of people who don't normally play RTSs.

Mark: Well, I didn't like it. For me it was just *Command & Conquer* in 3D without the resource management. Which would be great except C&C bores me to death.

Richie: It's a very simple game to get on with.

Keith: It's got that basic board-game feel to it, like real-time *Risk* sort of.

Richie: It's just a fun, easy-to-learn bit of entertainment. I loved the multiplayer and I was hoping it would be really big online, like a strategy version of *Quake*. It's so disappointing that people didn't buy it.

Mark: But the landscape is so uniform, so featureless and boring to look at. It's full of pastel, beige colours.

Rhianna: War is beige.

Martin: Again, individual units

are more important. You have more control than if you have thousands of soldiers to direct in formations.

Richie: The AI is fantastic.

Keith: All your units do exactly what you expect them to do and go where you want them to go.

Rhianna: When you're fighting something they don't just clump up, they surround the target. AI is going to be important in future RTSs. They'll have to develop it so it reacts almost like the AI in a

Rhianna: But it's all just green fields and hills.

Mark: But that's what medieval Japan was like. Haven't you watched Kurosawa?

Richie: Because of all the units you have to have these big open spaces to have the battles, which is what it was like anyway. There's nothing to get in the way.

Martin: It's the only game here that captures the essence of battle. It has fantastic sound and builds a great atmosphere,

"It's the only game here that actually has humour in it"

KEITH ON Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

first-person shooter. Usually units in RTS games are just stupid.

Richie: The AI in *Cossacks* is abysmal.

Keith: In *Warrior Kings* it's shocking.

SHOGUN: WARLORDS

Martin: What a game. In my opinion, there's not a single game in this Supertest that even comes close. It does exactly what it says on the box – Total War – and the *Mongol Invasion* add-on bundled with this edition just makes it all the better

Mark: Where are the nuclear weapons then? Where are the machine guns?

Martin: There was nothing like *Shogun* when it came out, with its thousands of soldiers. It's just carnage. It has proper 3D terrain, weather, loads of formations. It's a class apart.

especially in the Mongol campaigns.

Mark: It has the best camera control of any 3D RTS ever made.

Rhianna: The sound and music they used is very good as well.

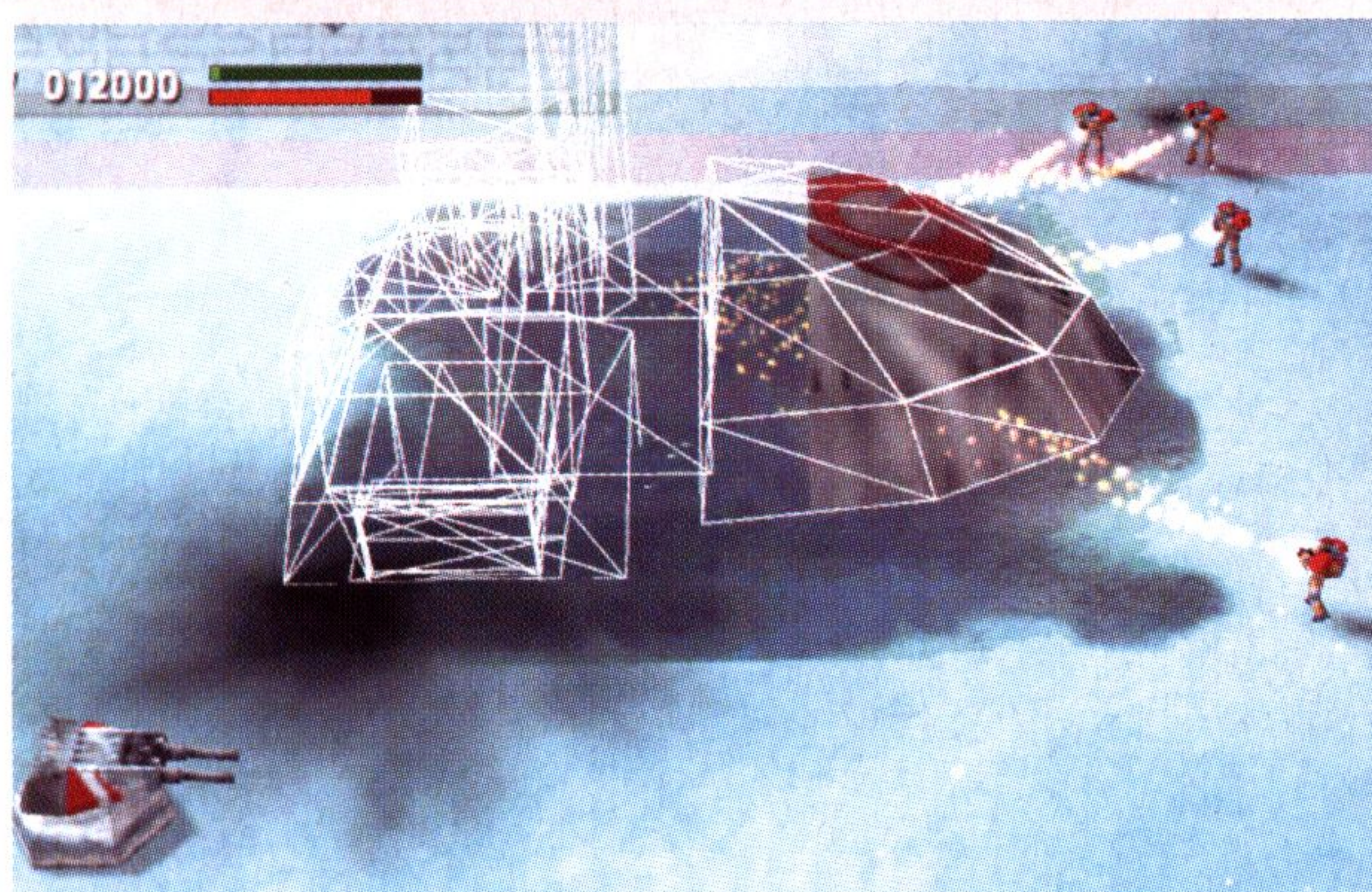
Mark: For a simpleton like me the tactics were a bit too complex, with so many formations and hotkeys.

Richie: No it's not, it's simple.

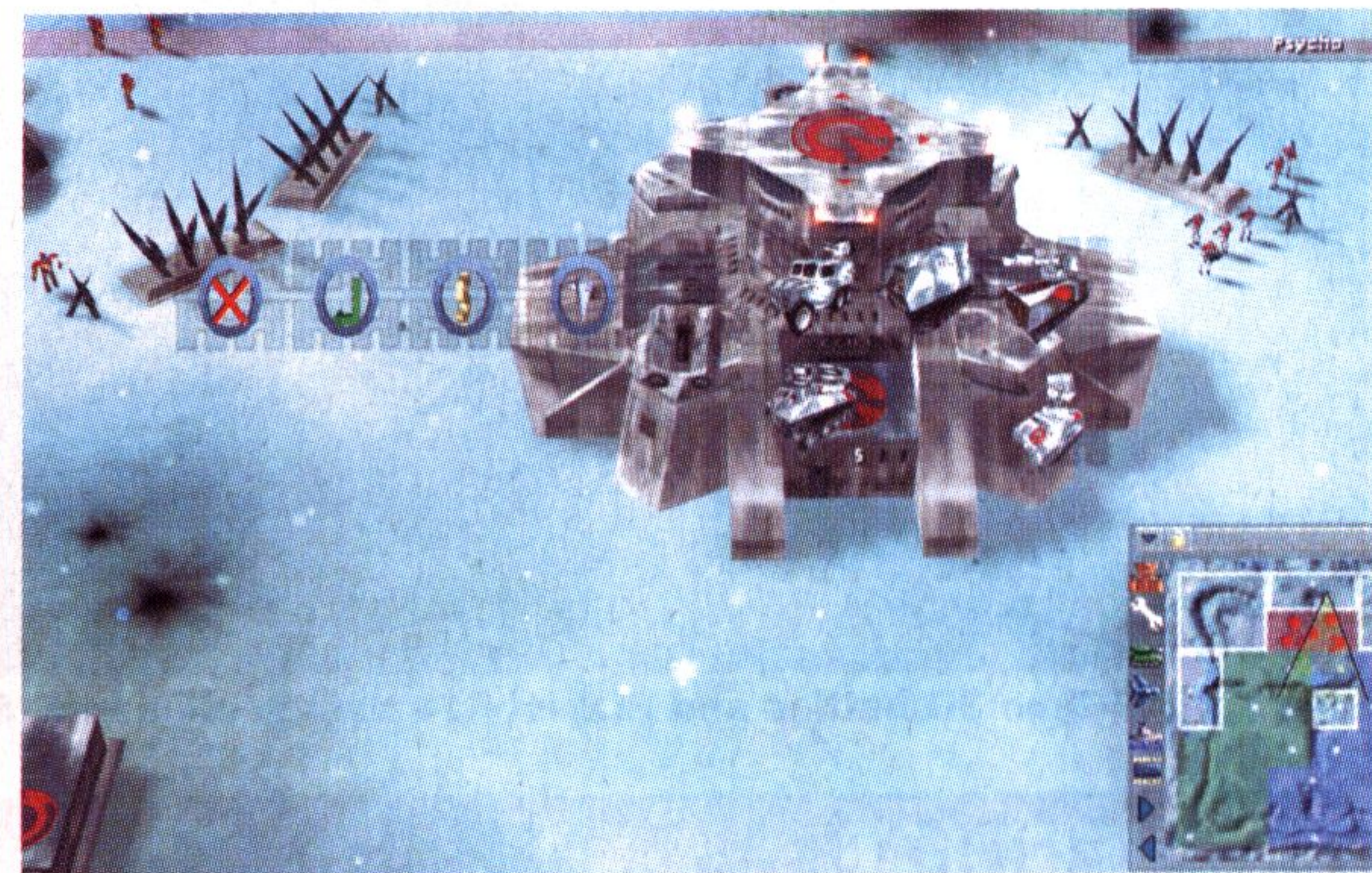
Keith: I agree with Mark. I actually turned the battles off completely at one stage, and even then it's brilliant. It's very customisable. You can play it how you want. If you don't want really long drawn out battles you don't have to play them.

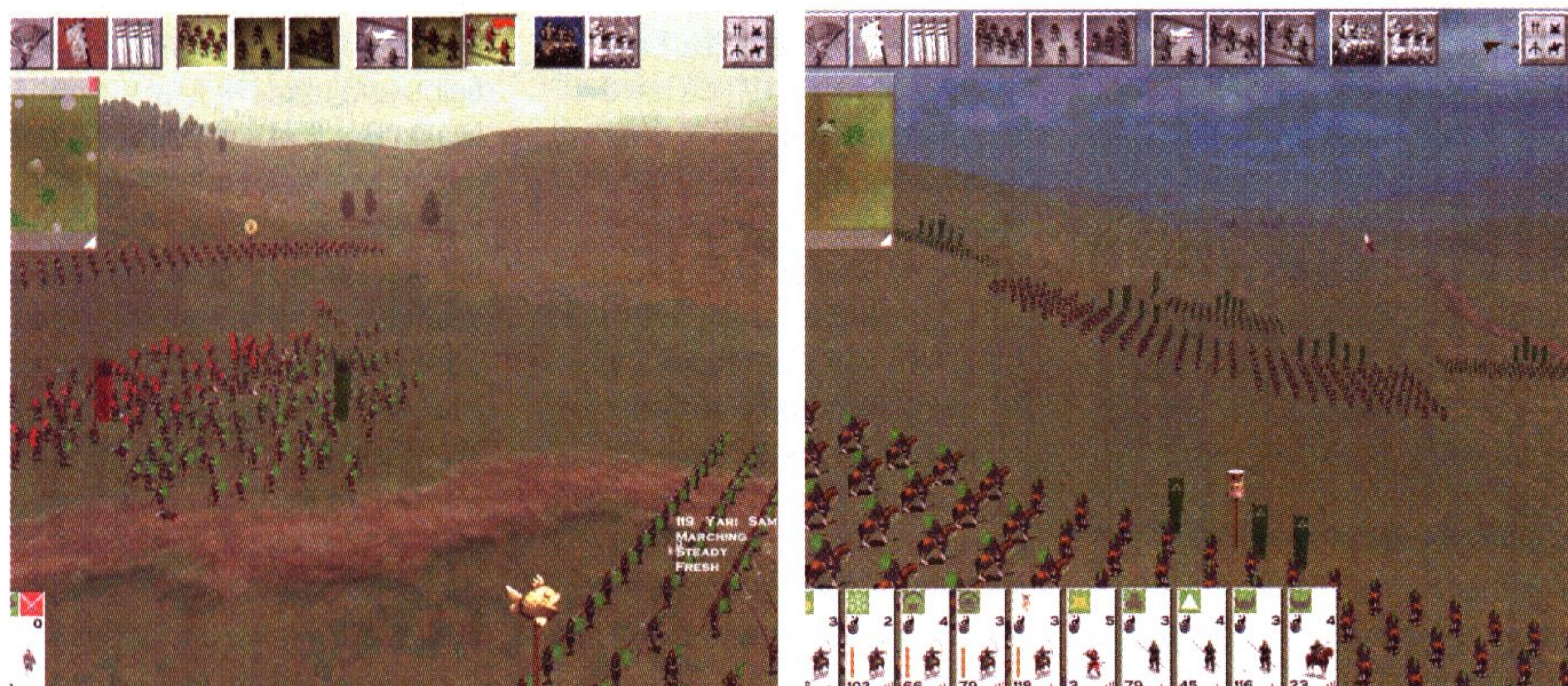
Richie: What you want is a battle played tapping two buttons like *Track & Field*.

Mark: The single-player campaign is just great. The way



It's pure destructive action, but at least *Z: Steel Soldiers* doesn't take itself too seriously.





With beautiful 3D landscapes and thousands of troops, *Shogun* is the most spectacular RTS to date.

you play through a *Risk*-style map in between the big fights.

Keith: That's what I loved. The assassinations and stuff. There's lots more going on than just the fighting.

"It's far too easy to lay siege to a place. But the AI is great"

MARTIN ON SHOGUN

Rhianna: I like it less than the others because it doesn't have much of an economy. I like a bit of micromanagement. I want farming as well. I want old women knitting socks.

Martin: Wierd.

Mark: It's because there's

none of that that I like it so much.

Richie: There is a bit of resource management in the map screen too. The only thing I don't like about *Shogun* are the castle battles. They're all right, but

not brilliant.

Martin: They're just pointless. There aren't many tactics involved. It's too easy to lay siege to a place. But the AI is great. It sets up traps and everything.

Rhianna: If you combined the strategy of *Shogun* with the

economy of *Warrior Kings* you'd have the perfect game. Strategy isn't just about what happens on the battlefield. What happens back at home is also important.

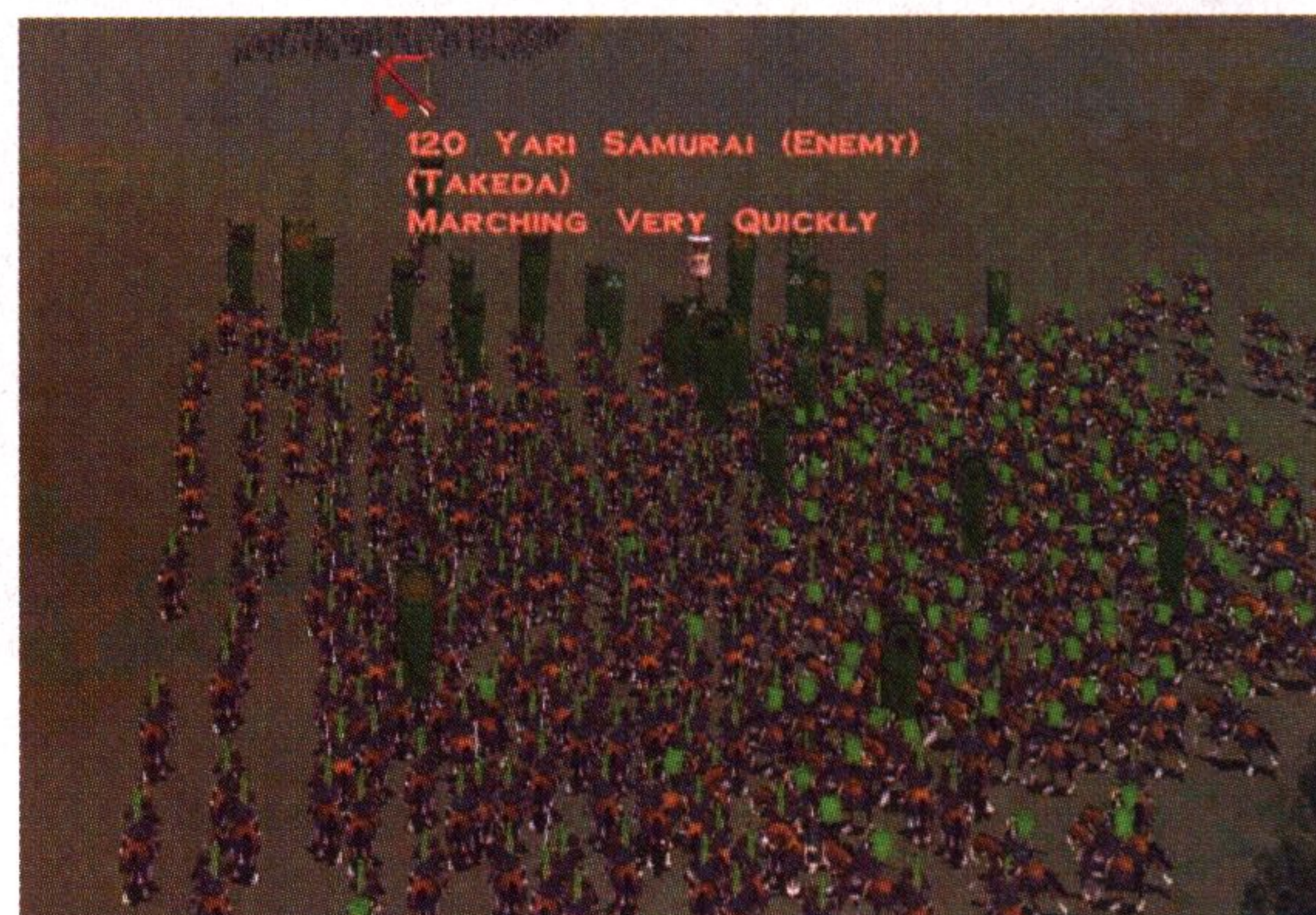
Martin: And fatigue and morale are really important too.

Mark: The biggest thing for me was that you can pause it and still move the camera around and give all your orders. Being more of a turn-based strategy fan I like to make decisions unhurried, so I can think about things.

Martin: You can in *Warrior Kings* too.

Mark: Yeah, but it's pointless when you have to do all the resource management thing at the same time. **PC**

THE WINNER IS... SHOGUN: WARLORDS

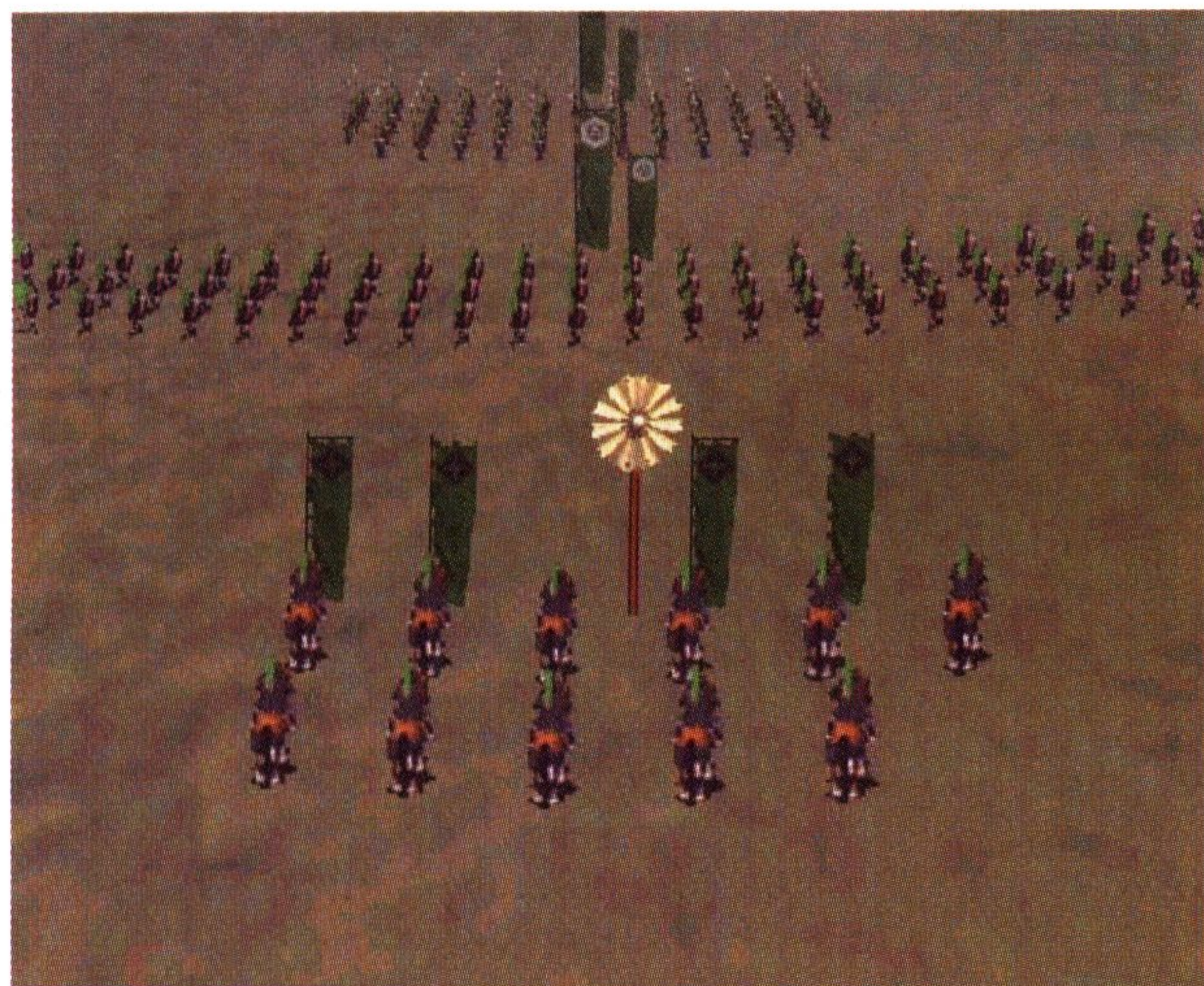


It's not quite the overwhelming majority that *Medal Of Honor* got in the recent FPS Supertest, but four out of five votes for *Shogun* ain't bad.

"It's got everything you want in a strategy game," said Richie, "apart from nuclear weapons". Martin agreed wholeheartedly: "It's got everything you want in a war game and more." Keith was so impressed by all the games on offer that he had no qualms about playing any of them until the end, but *Shogun* got his vote because "you can assassinate people through rice paper." Mark was torn between *Shogun* and *Battle*

Realms but admitted that "Shogun edges it because you can pause and still give out orders."

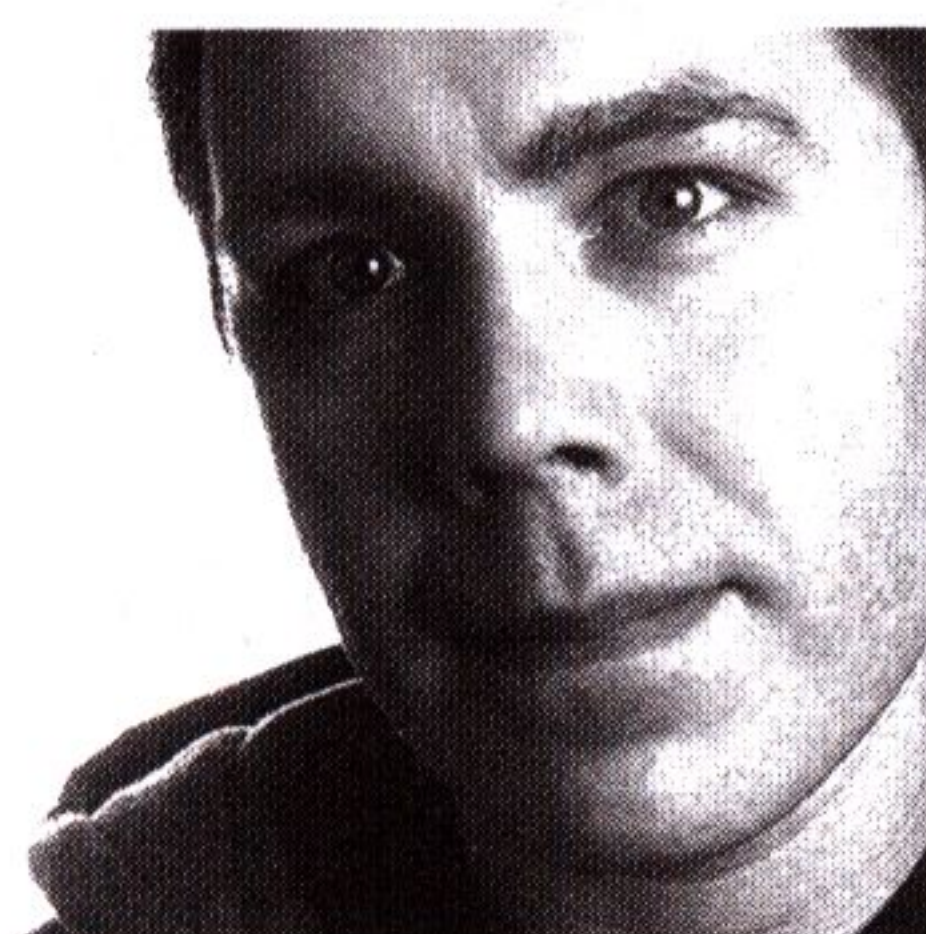
Rhianna couldn't forgive its lack of economical micromanagement though, and provided the only dissenting voice, opting instead for *Battle Realms*, a game most of the panel loved. "I like the individual attention to detail in the units, the animation is very good and it's very easy to get into." So there you have it, *Battle Realms* comes second but *Shogun* is definitely the clear winner. It ain't called *Total War* for nothing.



With its real-time 3D battles and *Risk*-style strategy elements, *Shogun* is hugely entertaining and massively diverse.

THE VERDICT

IT WAS REALLY CLOSE AND PEOPLE HAD TO THINK HARD TO CHOOSE A FAVOURITE, BUT IN THE END WE DID HAVE A CLEAR WINNER



RICHIE

Shogun
Warrior Kings
Shogun
Battle Realms



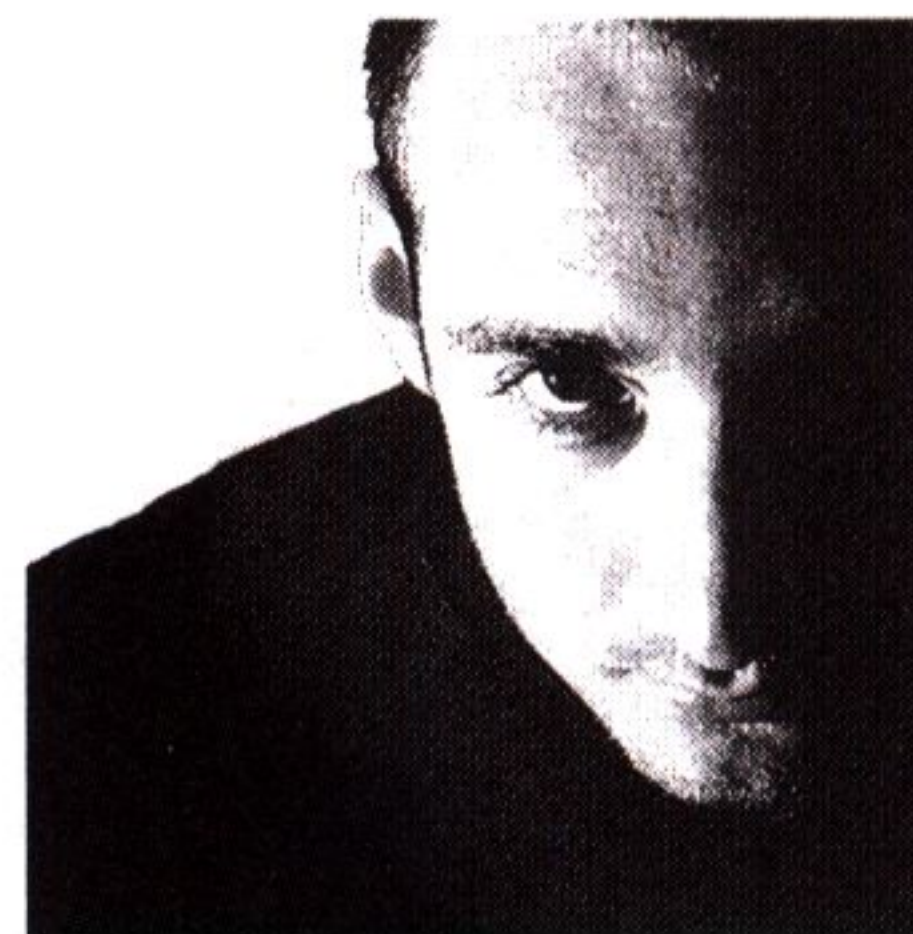
MARTIN

Shogun
Warrior Kings
Shogun
Warrior Kings



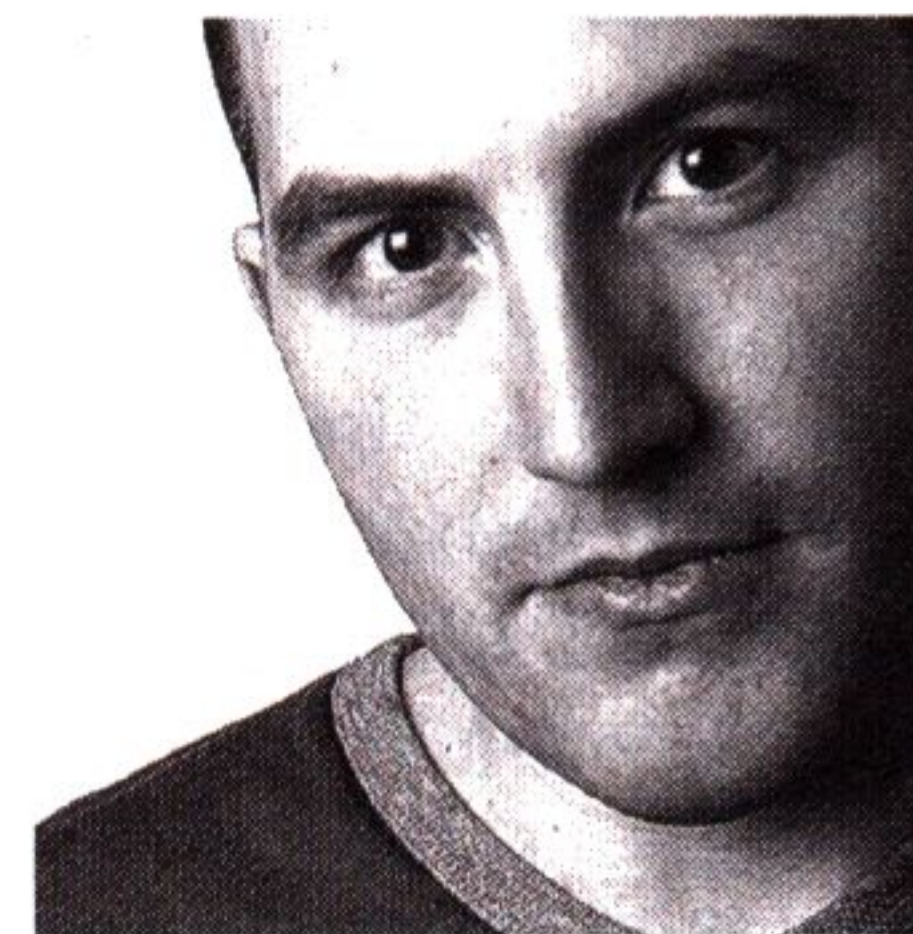
RHIANNA

Battle Realms
Warrior Kings
Cossacks
Battle Realms



KEITH

Shogun
Battle Realms
Battle Realms
Shogun



MARK

Shogun
Battle Realms
Shogun
Battle Realms

BEST GAME
RUNNER UP
MULTIPLAYER
RUNNER UP



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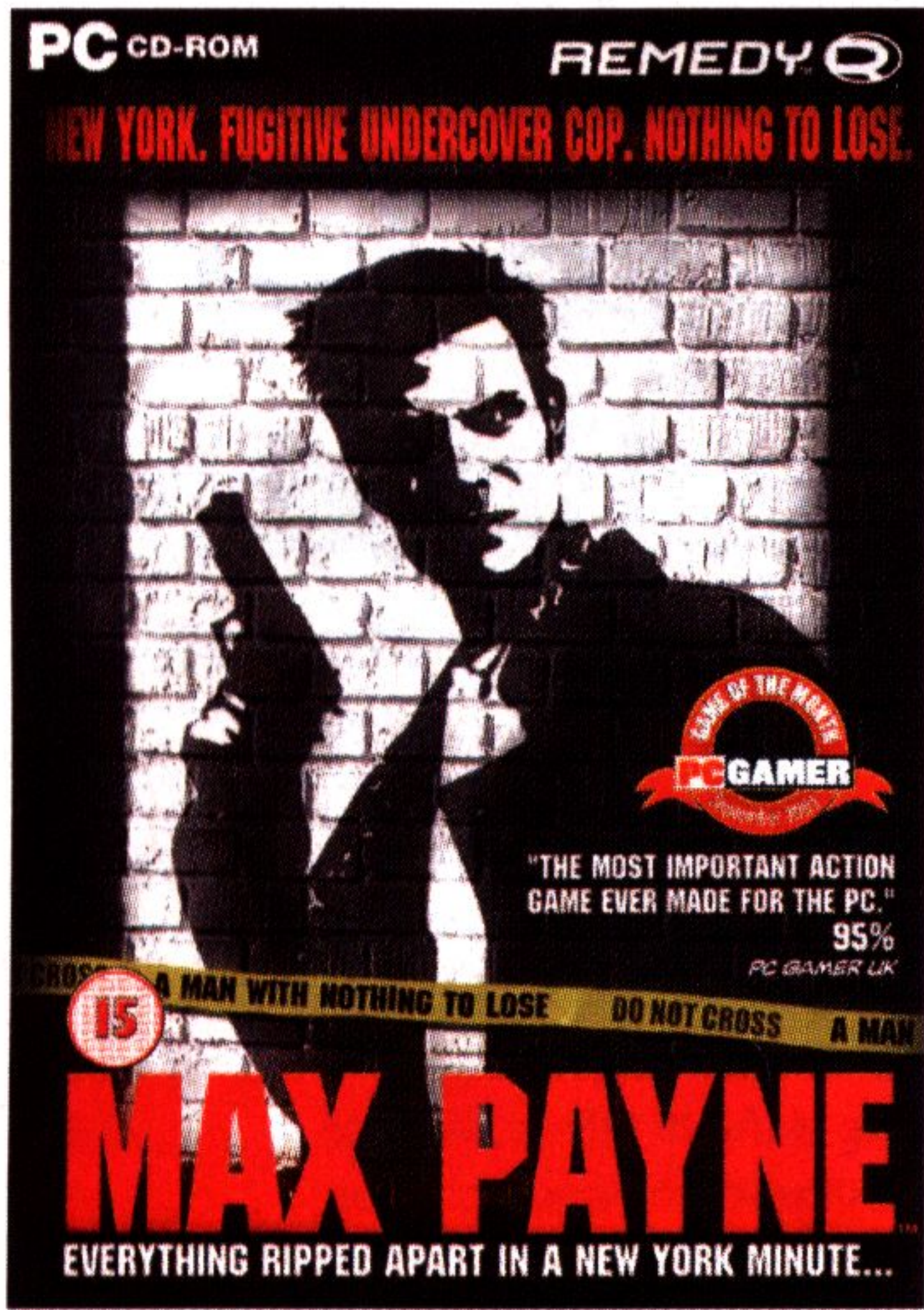
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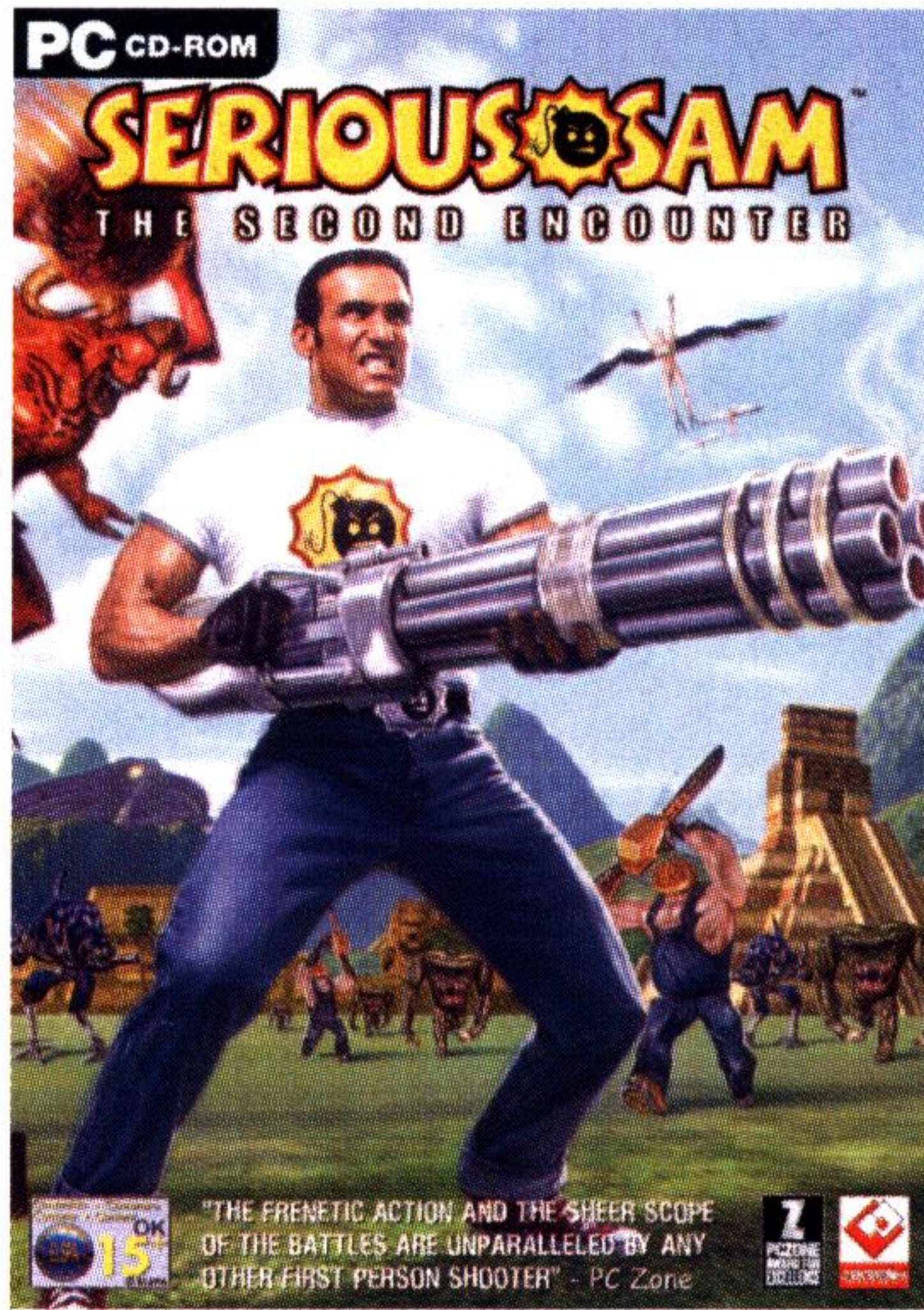
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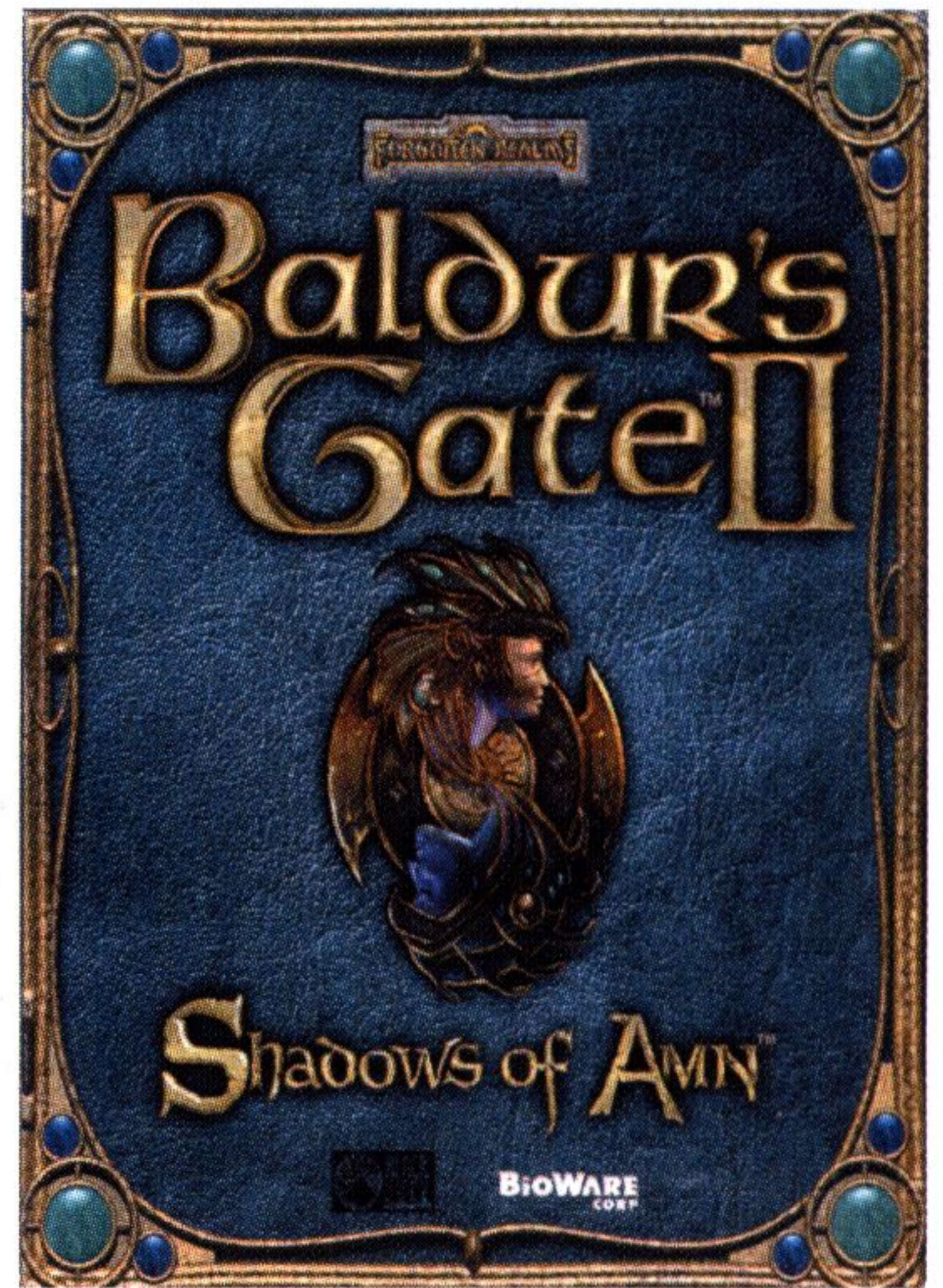
2 GAMES FOR £30



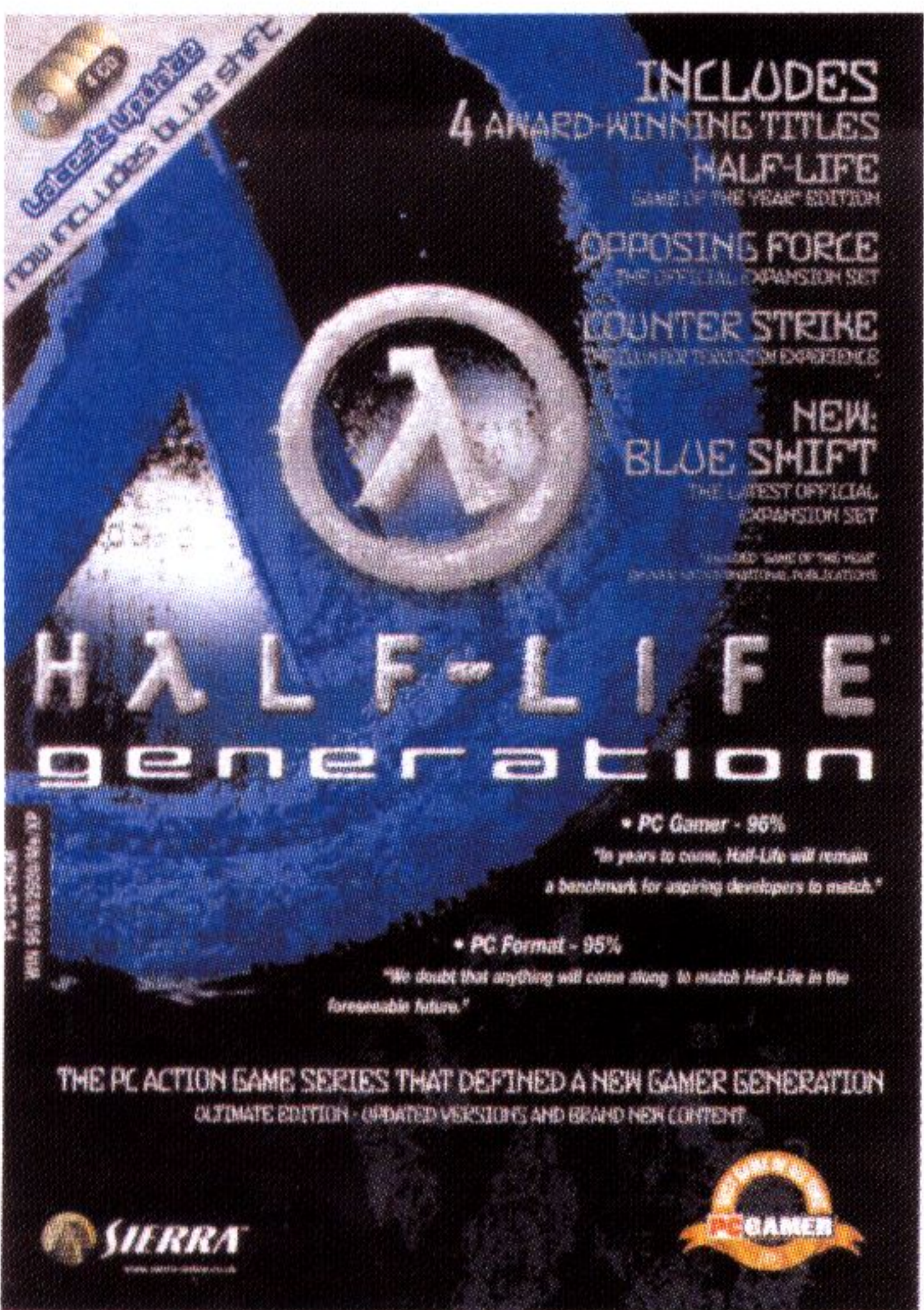
Max Payne



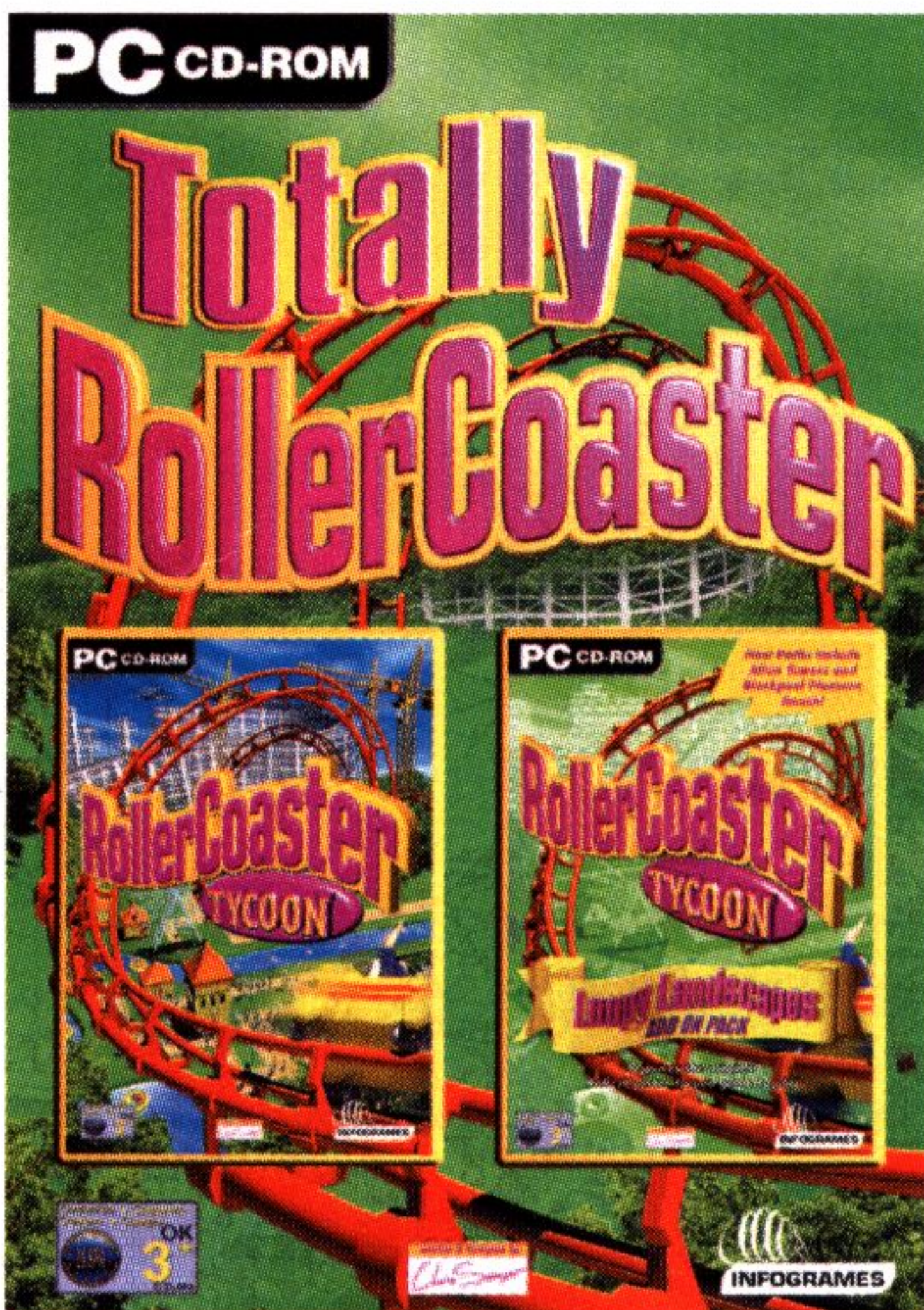
Serious Sam 2



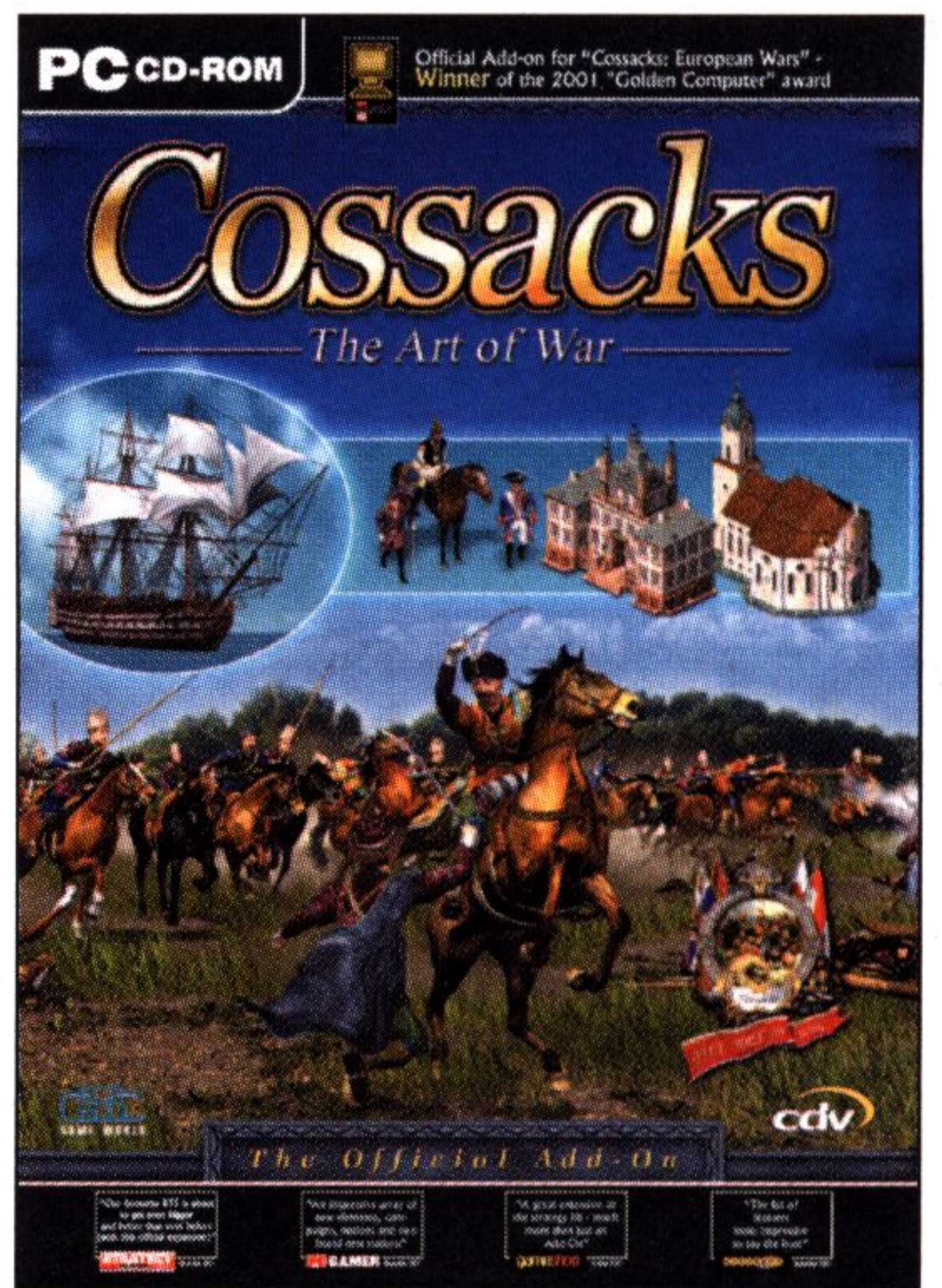
Baldur's Gate II



Half-Life Generation 3



Totally RollerCoaster



Cossacks

The Art Of War

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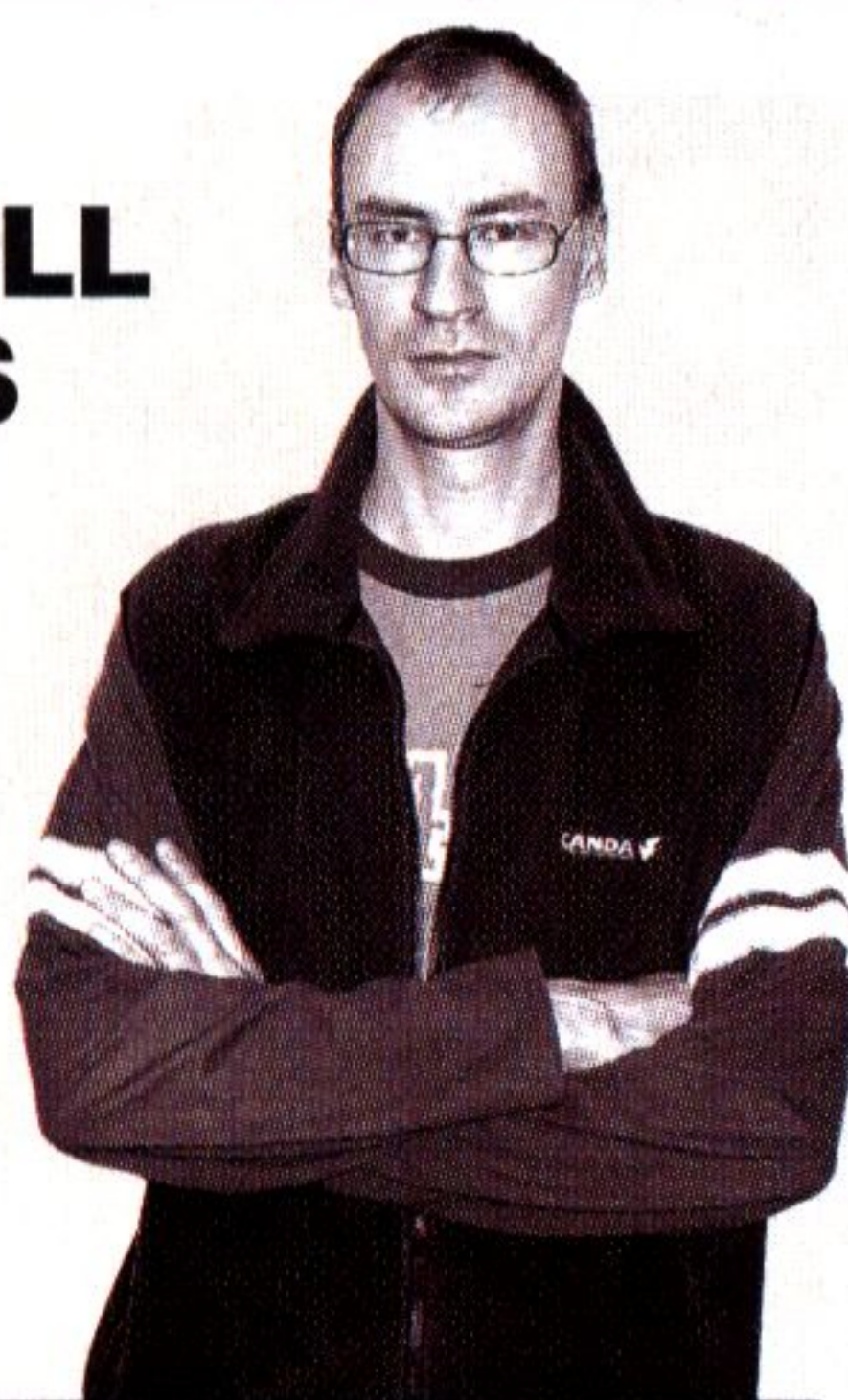
Virgin

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HARDWARE

**BOYS WILL
BE BOYS**



■ **HARD WIRED** Tim Ponting

▲ It seems the whole PC component world has gone pissing-contest-crazy. On a daily basis, you see NVIDIA and ATI directing their own particular brand of liquid in each other's general direction. "We have more advanced Pixel Shaders than you do," claims a bellicose ATI. NVIDIA responds with the taunt: "Show us your frame-rates!" And who can forget the ultimate urinal face-off – Intel versus AMD?

Intel projects its hard-won stream in the form of clockspeeds. "It's the only universal measure of processor speed," the company declares confidently. AMD, on the other hand, would retort that it's not how fast you pump but how you handle it. "More instructions per clock cycle, you pansies!"

And what happens as a result of this? The games you buy require ever increasing levels of performance to achieve decent gameplay. This is not necessarily a bad thing, otherwise we'd all be playing games that use sprites rather than 3D geometry. But what we really want, is decent performance for a decent price. Why can't the engineers produce better mid-range solutions?

It came as no shock to us that for some time last year, the bestselling video card in the UK was based on the Kyro II chipset from ST Microelectronics. It might not have set the world alight, but it never caused your wallet to spontaneously combust either. Equally, we applaud the efforts of AMD in reducing the price of their mid-speed processors on an almost weekly basis. Let's hope that in this atmosphere of schoolboy one-upmanship, no one loses sight of what we, the consumer, can afford.

Intel on the Warpath?

Pentium 4 price cuts could be on the way as Intel face up to price war with AMD

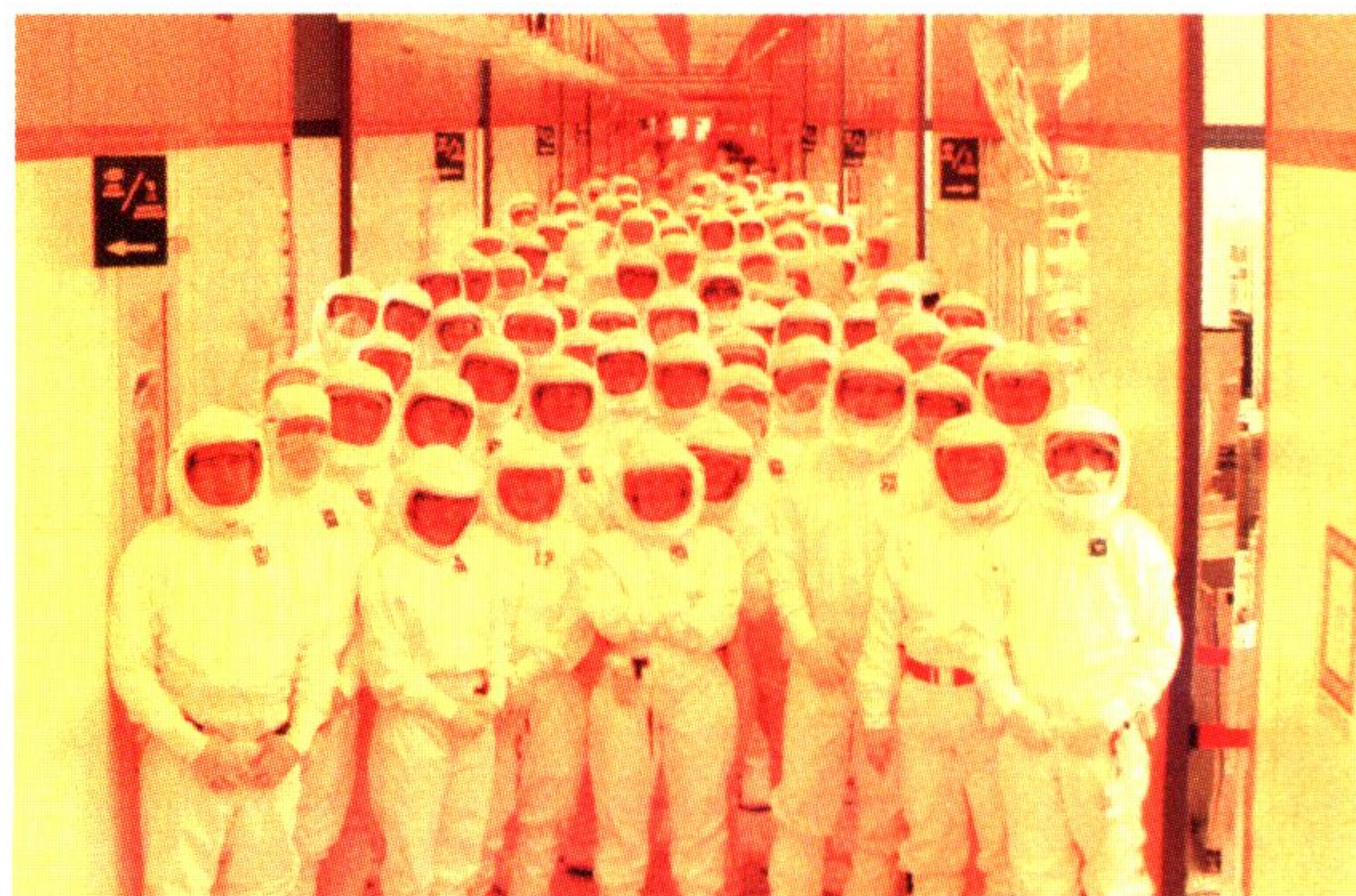
AS AMD'S ATHLON continues to dominate the enthusiast's market, Intel is circling like a hungry shark, with a round of price cuts predicted to kick off a feeding frenzy...

It came as no shock in *PC ZONE*'s most recent Reader's Survey that the majority of you have gaming machines with an Athlon under the bonnet. And if you check out our Pricewatch feature across the page, it doesn't take a PhD in Quantum Mechanics to realise just why. The newly released Athlon XP 2100+ is less than half the price of a 2.2GHz Pentium 4, while giving in most cases superior performance in most present-generation games.

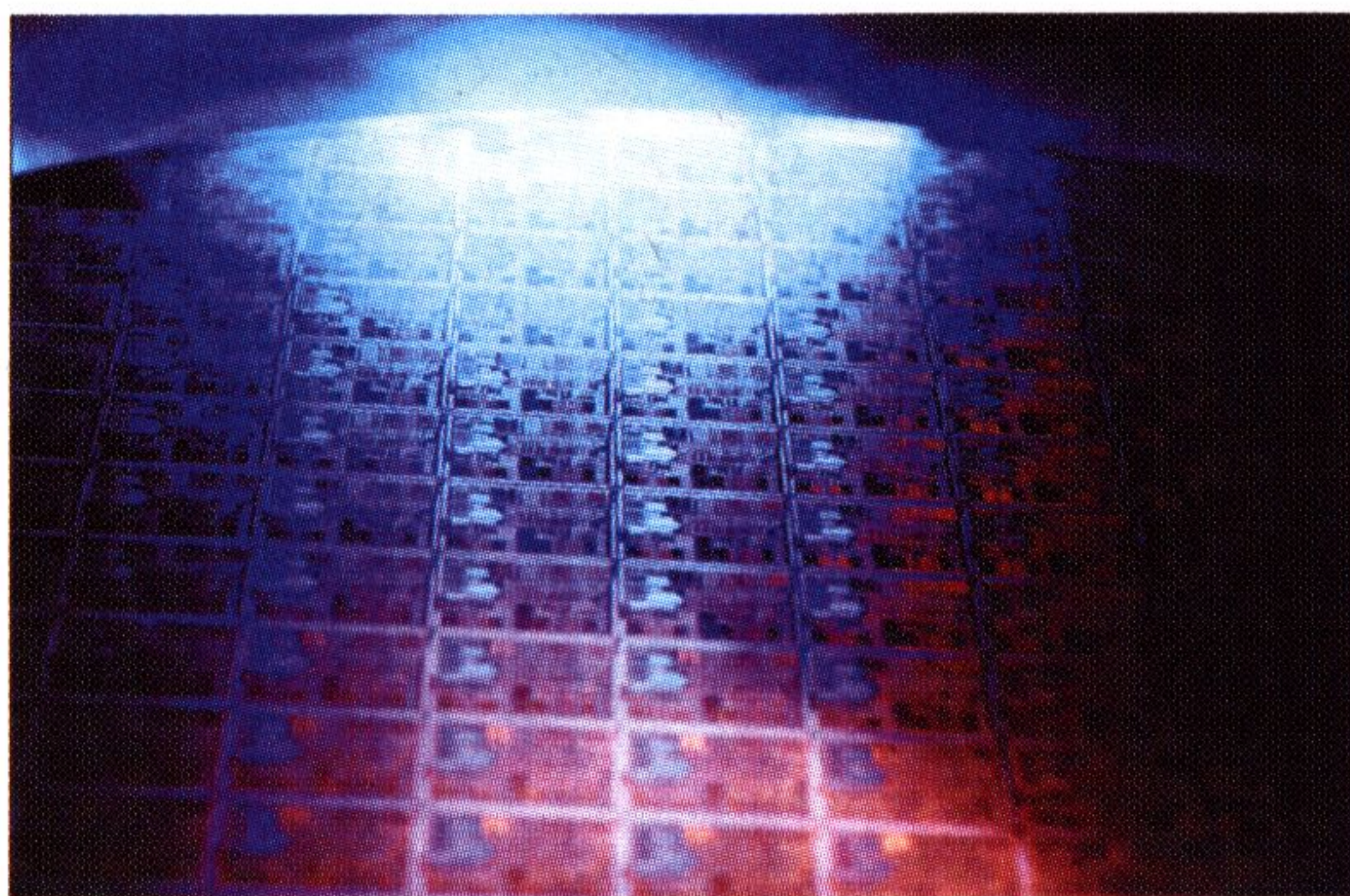
It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the Net is awash with strong rumours of impending price cuts across the Pentium 4 board, with the 2.2GHz reportedly slated for a 57 per cent drop. Respected US news site eWeek has stated that it is fears of a renewed Intel-AMD war that has triggered Chipzilla's share price drop in recent weeks as Wall Street analysts predict that a round of price cuts will herald a corresponding drop in profits.

As most impoverished gamers have as many shares in Intel as I have sets of Ferrari keys, this is nowt but great news for those of us who'd like a real choice of CPU in our throbbing game box. As we've pointed out, Pentium 4 offers many benefits over Athlon XP, not least of which is full support of Intel's SSE2 instruction set, not due to pop up on the Athlon processor roadmap until later this year.

If these rumours prove well founded, we should see the price of 2.2GHz Pentium 4s drop below the £240 mark. With ever-faster Pentium 4 motherboards available that are equipped for DDR RAM chips as opposed to their more expensive Rambus brethren, Intel should be able to compete for gamers' hearts on a level playing field. However, AMD is unlikely to allow its nemesis much room for manoeuvre, and we could see further cuts in Athlon XP pricing as AMD protects its hard-won lead in the enthusiast's market.



Pentium 4 gets faster still



"At the time of going to press, 2.4GHz Pentium 4 chips are less than a week away from launch"

WHILE IT MAY be value for money that is the deciding factor for most gamers out there, Intel continues to push the performance boundary. At the time of going to press, 2.4GHz Pentium 4 chips are less than a week away from launch. Simple maths would suggest that it's around nine per cent faster than the current cream of Intel's crop, and is just another step on Intel's relentless march towards 3GHz, a target the company has clearly earmarked as its exclusive preserve, and a goal for this year rather than next.

The 2.4GHz P4s are the first silicon babies to pop off Intel's new high-density production line. As they're the smallest Pentium 4s yet released, Intel can produce more chips from a single silicon wafer. Why do you care? Because ultimately, this will save Intel dosh, and you in turn should be able to pat your back pocket in a smug fashion, just like in the TV ads. Ker-ching!

Intel will also be releasing new motherboard chipsets this side of midsummer. While the latest addition to the 850 range is unlikely to set the games world on fire (it needs Rambus memory), the 845G is reportedly an evolution of the existing 845 DDR chipset, featuring integrated graphics and support for USB 2.0 – believe it or not, a faster USB specification. While integrated graphics are generally 'a good thing' – NVIDIA's excellent nForce chipsets being a positive example – it remains to be seen whether the 845G's performance will cut the mustard in today's 3D intensive games.



108
ROUND-UP
Graphics cards



112
DEAR WANDY
Got a problem that you can't fix?



114
WATCHDOG
Rogue traders beware



116
BUYER'S GUIDE
The best kit at the best prices

Affordable ADSL at last

BT's new wholesale pricing structures for ADSL are finally shaking down through the ISP food chain – here's a brief look at the best deals on offer...

FOLLOWING IN THE footsteps of BT's cut-price openworld offering come special offers from a host of providers. The cheapest price we could find is offered by Sheffield-based PlusNet, with the minuscule monthly charge of £22.99, including VAT. Granted you have to commit to a 12-month contract to get this, but many providers specify this in their small print anyway. And if you don't want the full contract, you can pay a small one-off administrative fee and have no set term. You have to source your own kit for the connection, and install yourself to avoid a hefty £247 set up fee, but it's a bargain by any standards.

Many other ISPs are also offering 'wires only' ADSL – you

supply the kit, they supply the service. So what do you actually require? For starters, you need a filter box – this is what splits out the ADSL line from your normal phone socket. This shouldn't set you back more than around a tenner. Secondly, you need a USB modem, which will cost you £100 plus. But be prepared, USB

installations can be notoriously fussy, so if you're not confident in your trouble-shooting skills, you may be better off buying a package that includes the gear and a friendly chain-smoking engineer to install and tut disapprovingly at the quality of the copper wire you've got entering your abode.

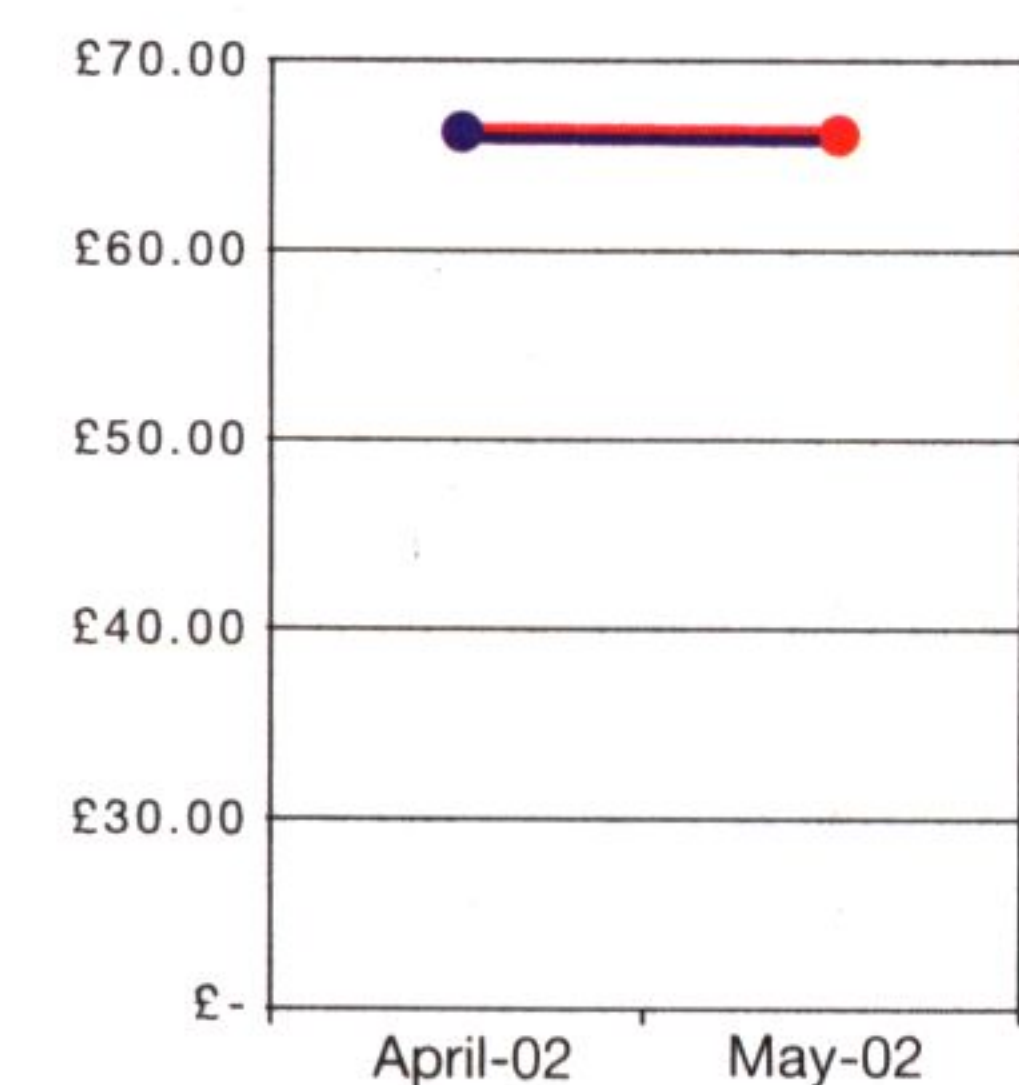
Below is a table showing the some of the cheaper ADSL service providers who are out there. We've only used BT openworld, so can only vouch for its quality – and no grumbles there. It might be a good idea to check out a few newsgroups to get an impression of the quality of other ISPs before you buy.

Package	Set-up	Monthly	Extras
BT openworld Plug & Go	£85.00	£29.99	Price includes USB modem
Freeserve Broadband	£149.00	£29.99	Set-up price includes USB modem/filter
Demon Express Solo	£50.00	£28.99	You have to buy your own filter/modem
Nildram Home500 Lite	£58.75	£25.99	You have to buy your own filter/modem
Nildram USB500	£75.00	£32.52	Includes USB modem/filter
PIPEX Xtreme Solo	£23.44	£130.00	For Alcatel USB modem/filter
PlusNet ADSL Home	£246.75	£22.99	Includes modem/filter and BT engineer set-up
PlusNet ADSL Home	£58.75	£22.99	You have to buy your own filter/modem

PRICEWATCH

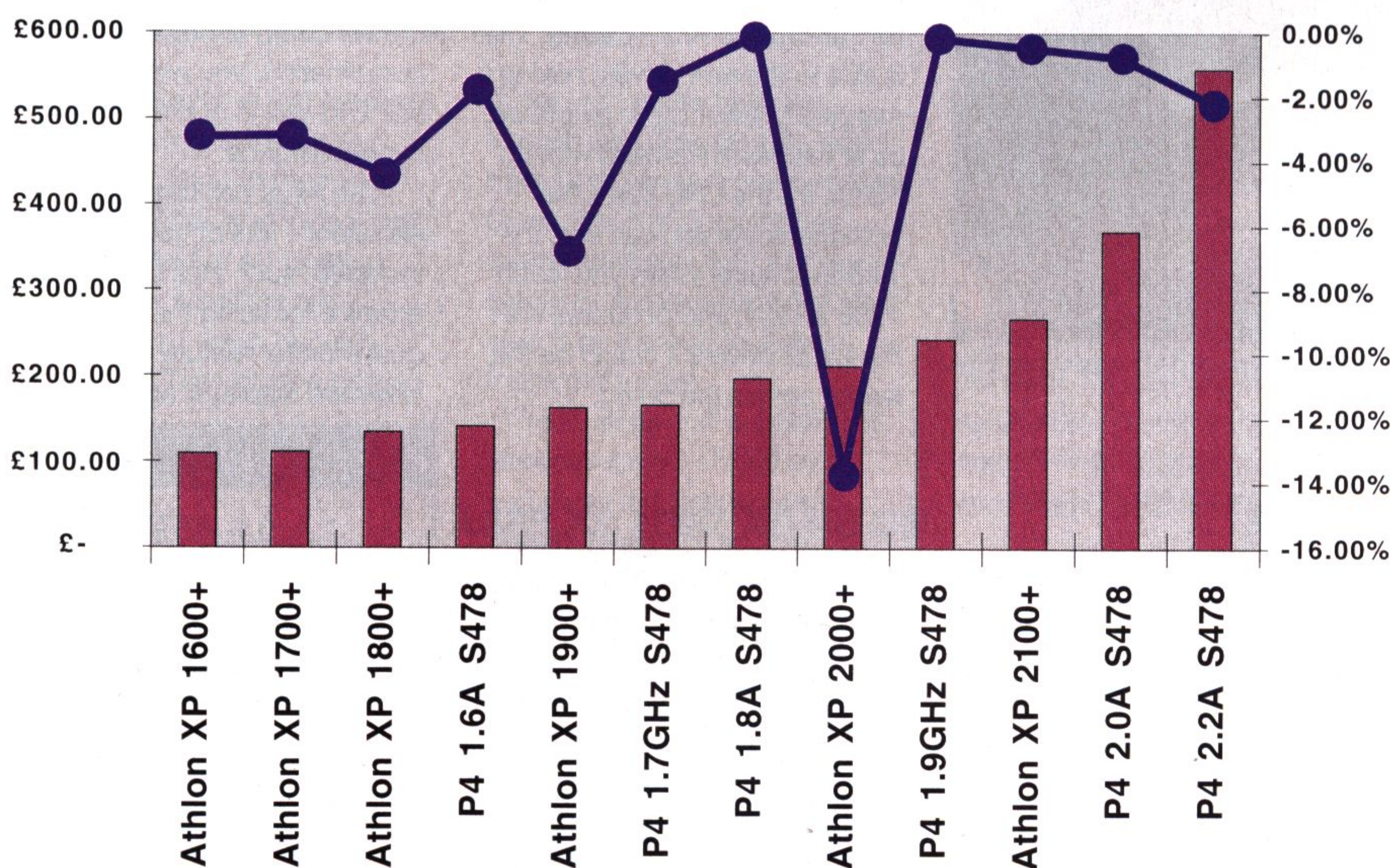
Memory prices are holding firm on the high side, processors likewise...

NOT MUCH TO report on the memory front I'm afraid kids. Crucial.com, our memory purveyor of choice, has managed to hold steady at around £67 for 256Mb of both PC133 SDR RAM and PC2100 DDR RAM. The memory market is still looking decidedly jittery, though there's talk of demand being alleviated by extra capacity before too long – basically Windows XP needs so much of the darn stuff that you punters can't get enough of it. But don't expect sudden drops for a short while yet.



Price per 256Mb RAM:
● PC133 SDR
● PC2100 DDR

JUNE 2002 PROCO CHART



We have a new entry in the form of AMD's Athlon XP 2100+, which crashes in comfortably on the better side of the 2.0 and 2.2GHz Pentium 4s. Like last month, we see only slight price drops across the board, with the exception of the Athlon XP 2000+, which enjoys a similar price crash as the Athlon XP

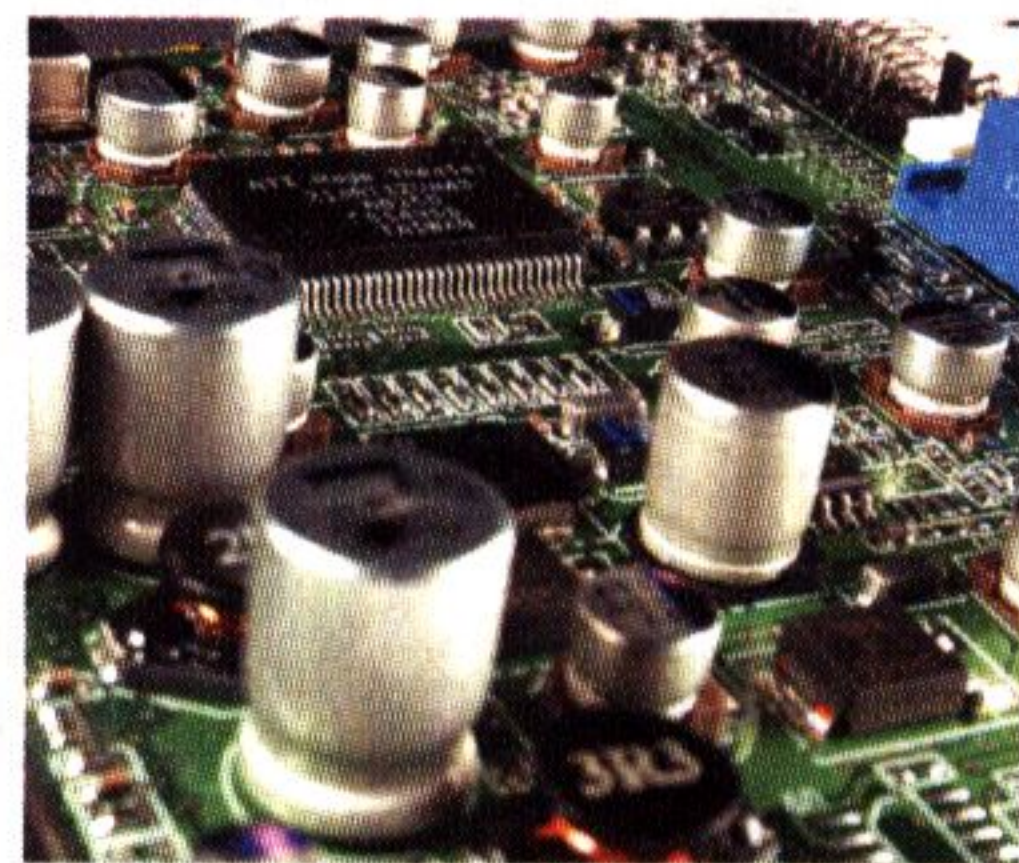
1900+ did last month. This is probably to ensure that AMD's fastest processor remains premium price, while everything else nudges down to keep the same price curve. In any case, an Athlon XP 2000+ for just over £200 is fantastic value for money by any standards...

SNIPPETS

DIRECTX 9 UNVEILED

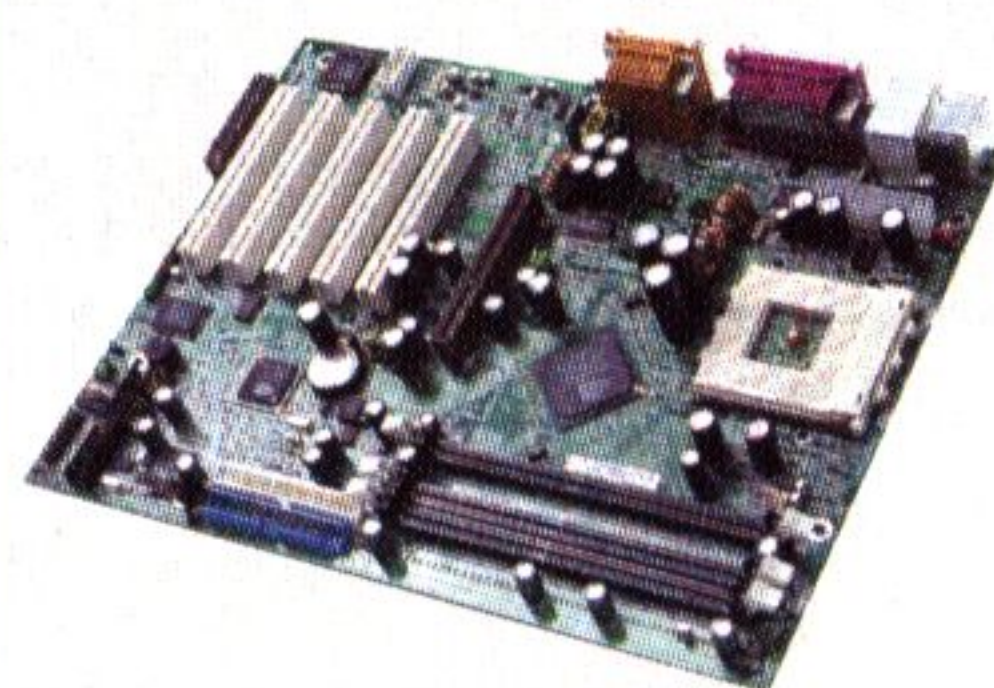
Microsoft has just unveiled a few titbits concerning the new features of DirectX 9. One of the most interesting is the inclusion of a high-level language that is hardware agnostic (it doesn't care what card you are programming for) to generate efficient shader code automatically when compiled. What does this mean? More games that utilise all the powerful features your current generation card supports, rather than a handful of games that have one or two shader features that may only work on one particular video card.

RADEON 10000?



Online sources close to ATI have leaked details about the successor to the Radeon 8500, formerly codenamed R300. The next Radeon is to be called '10000', and will feature twin Pixel and Vertex Shader units – this compares with a single Pixel Shader and twin Vertex Shaders in GeForce 4. It is also rumoured to have no fewer than eight pipelines, each equipped with four texture units, more than any other card currently available, and to be a 'proper' DirectX 9 part. It's unclear when they're likely to hit the shelves but it seems that ATI want to out-manoeuvre NVIDIA and its upcoming NV30 chipset if humanly possible. The video card war gets hotter by the minute...

NFORCE PUMPED UP



As predicted in our news story in the April 2002 issue, the next version of NVIDIA's excellent nForce motherboard chipsets are on their way. The 615D and 620D chipsets will have full support for 333MHz DDR memory, which thanks to NVIDIA's twinbank memory architecture and close integration with the video subsystem should give excellent performance alongside the company's chipset competitors. NVIDIA presentations at CeBIT also revealed that there are nForce chipsets supporting 400MHz DDR memory in development. The whole world is going clockspeed crazy!



ASUS V8440 GEFORCE 4 TI4400

■ Manufacturer: Asus | Price: £226 | Phone: N/A | www.asus.com

WE'RE GOING to go big on graphs and small on words for this review, mainly because we've talked the GeForce 4 Titanium range to death over the last couple of issues. If you've missed the lowdown, check out last month's round-up and the GeForce 4 preview in the issue before that for general background information.

The Titanium 4400 is NVIDIA's 'low high-end' card, by which I mean if the Ti4600 is Man United and the MX440 Man City, the 4400 weighs in at around the Tottenham Hotspur level – mid-table Premiership. The speed at which the processor core runs is 275MHz, with memory running at 550MHz DDR (Double Data Rate). This is slower than the 4600, which

is clocked at 300MHz/650MHz respectively, but faster than the old GeForce 3 Ti500 – core speed of 240MHz and memory at 500MHz DDR.

IN THE SAME LEAGUE

As a result, it slips in at pretty much the same place in the video card pecking order as you'd expect – between the NVIDIA Ti4600 and Radeon

8500. We set up an identical machine for testing, though the NVIDIA driver utilised was the more recent 28.32. This gives the Ti4400 a slight advantage over the other cards tested with the 27.20 driver, but it's still in the performance ballpark you'd expect.

Ironically, it just edged the Ti4600 under *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* at 1024 x 768 with no Full-Screen Anti-Aliasing. This is due to the new drivers having a marginally lower basic overhead, as at this resolution and with no FSAA, it's the CPU that's the bottleneck. As you can see, the Ti4600 is faster when you reach 1280 x 1024, and of course with the 28.32 drivers it would be the leader across the board.

"It's not the fastest video card money can buy... it might be described as the wise man's purchase"

PERFORMANCE THEORY

However, we have to confess to being very impressed with the Ti4400. Street prices are typically around £90 less than the Ti4600 and unless you're running at very high resolutions or have a superfast motherboard-processor combination, you won't really see £90-worth of difference in performance.

The Asus package is excellent – lots of goodies are included, such as a DVI-VGA adaptor for using the TwinView dual monitor feature with two standard displays, and both

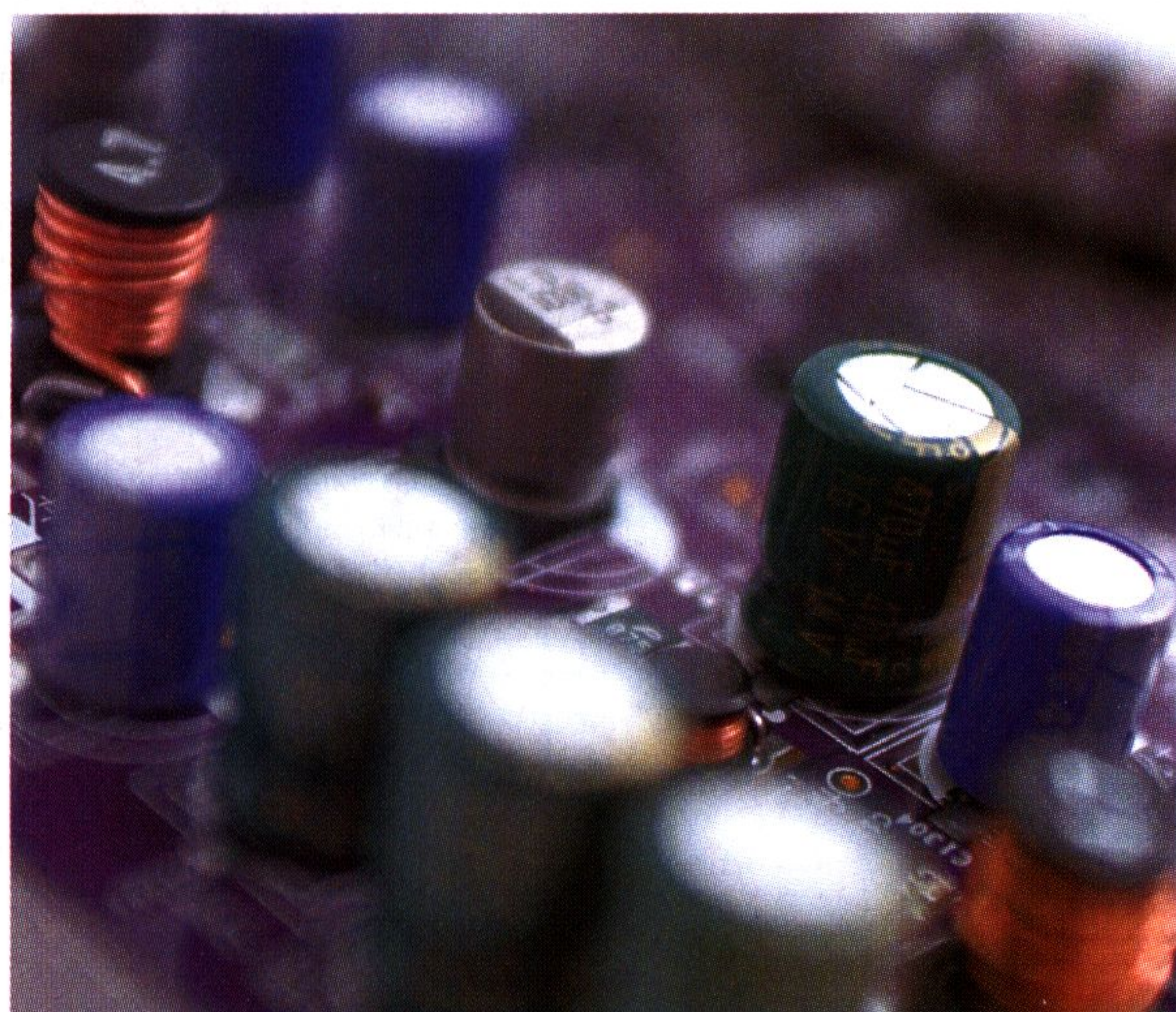
S-Video and Composite Video socketry for the TV Out.

In conclusion, while the Ti4600 has to remain our Best Buy simply because it's the fastest video card money can currently buy, the Ti4400 might perhaps be described as the wise man's purchase. I know which of the two I'd plump for on my earnings.

**PCZONE
VERDICT**

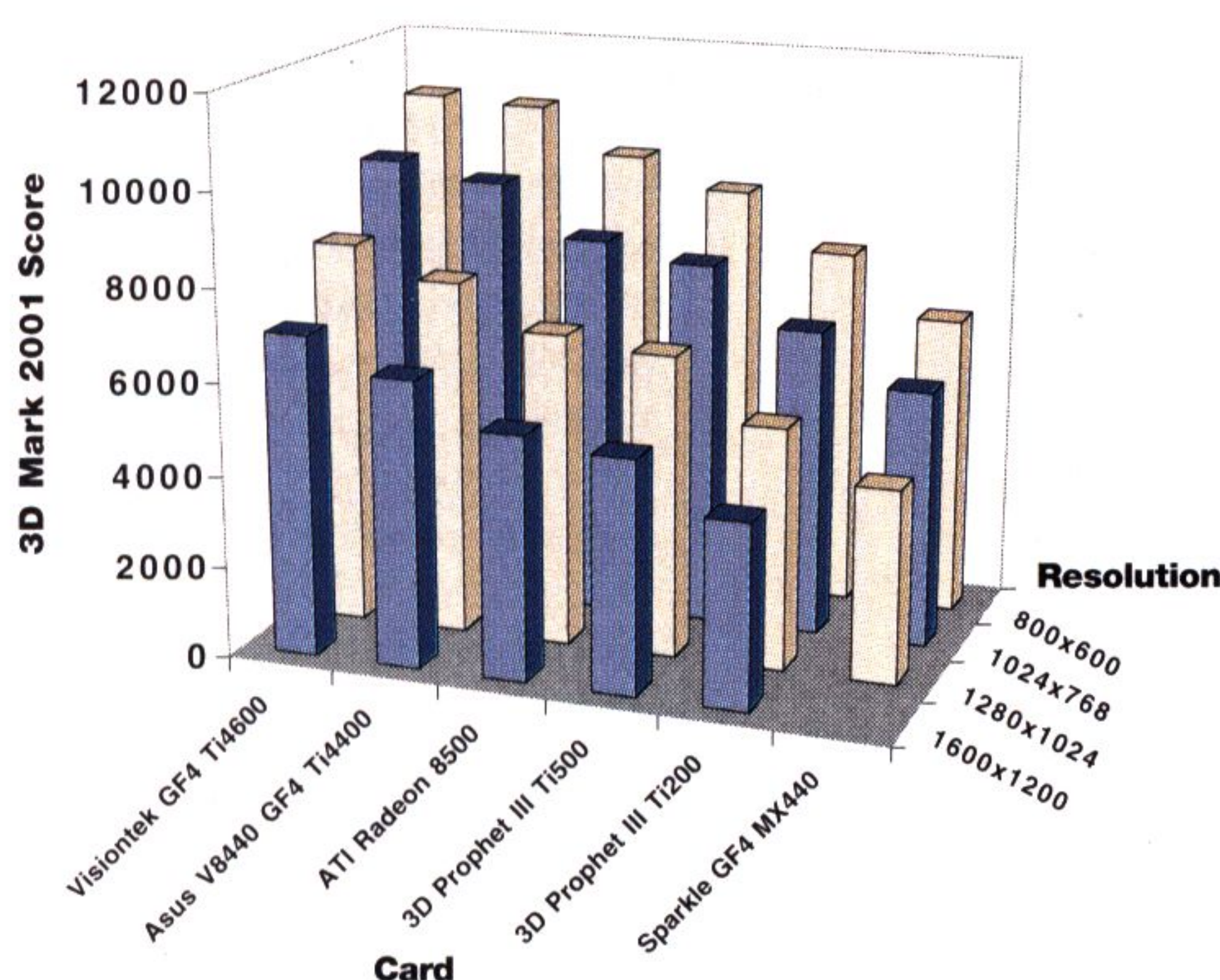
87

Good value for a good performer

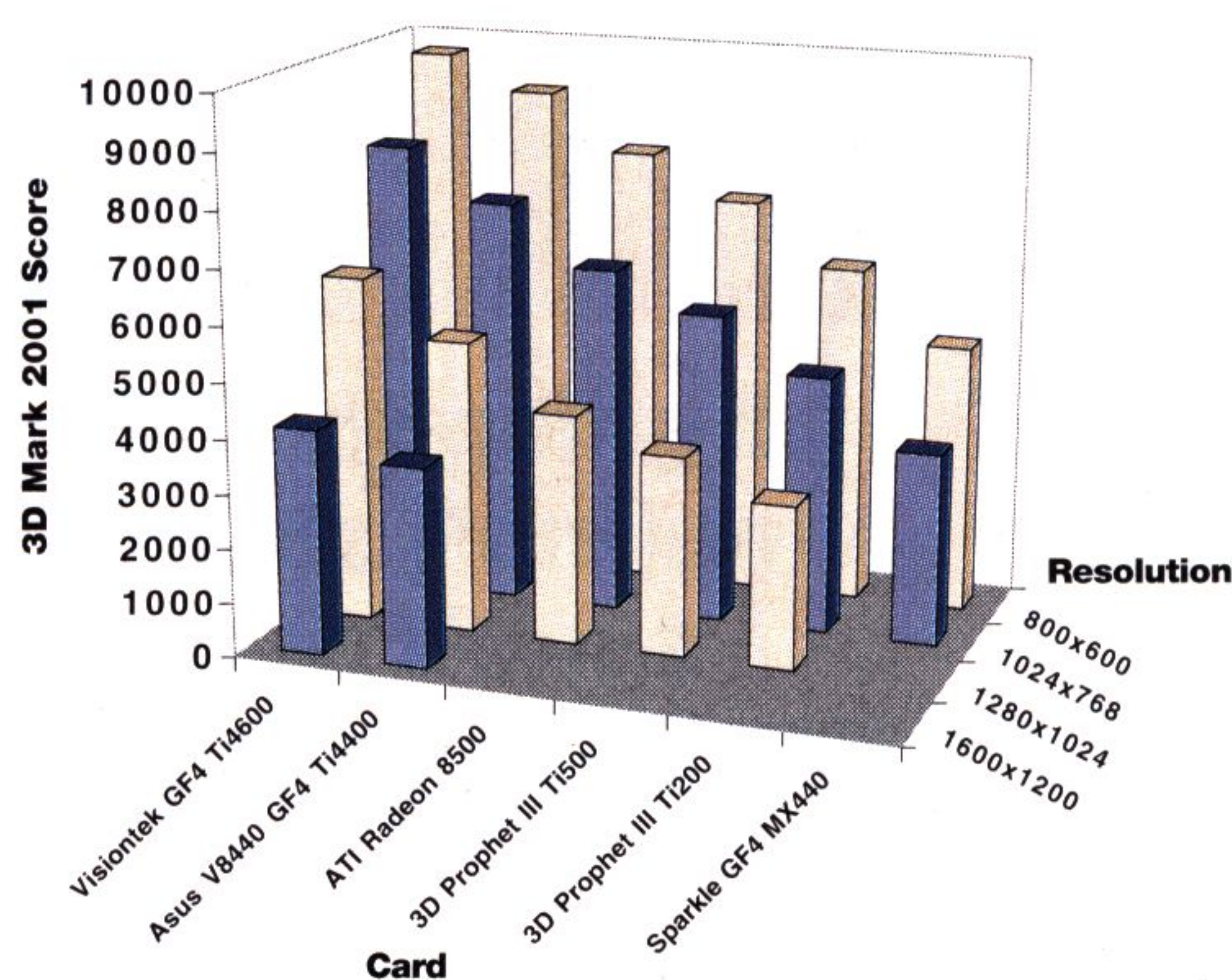


The wise man's buy, with superb performance delivered via the new NVIDIA drivers.

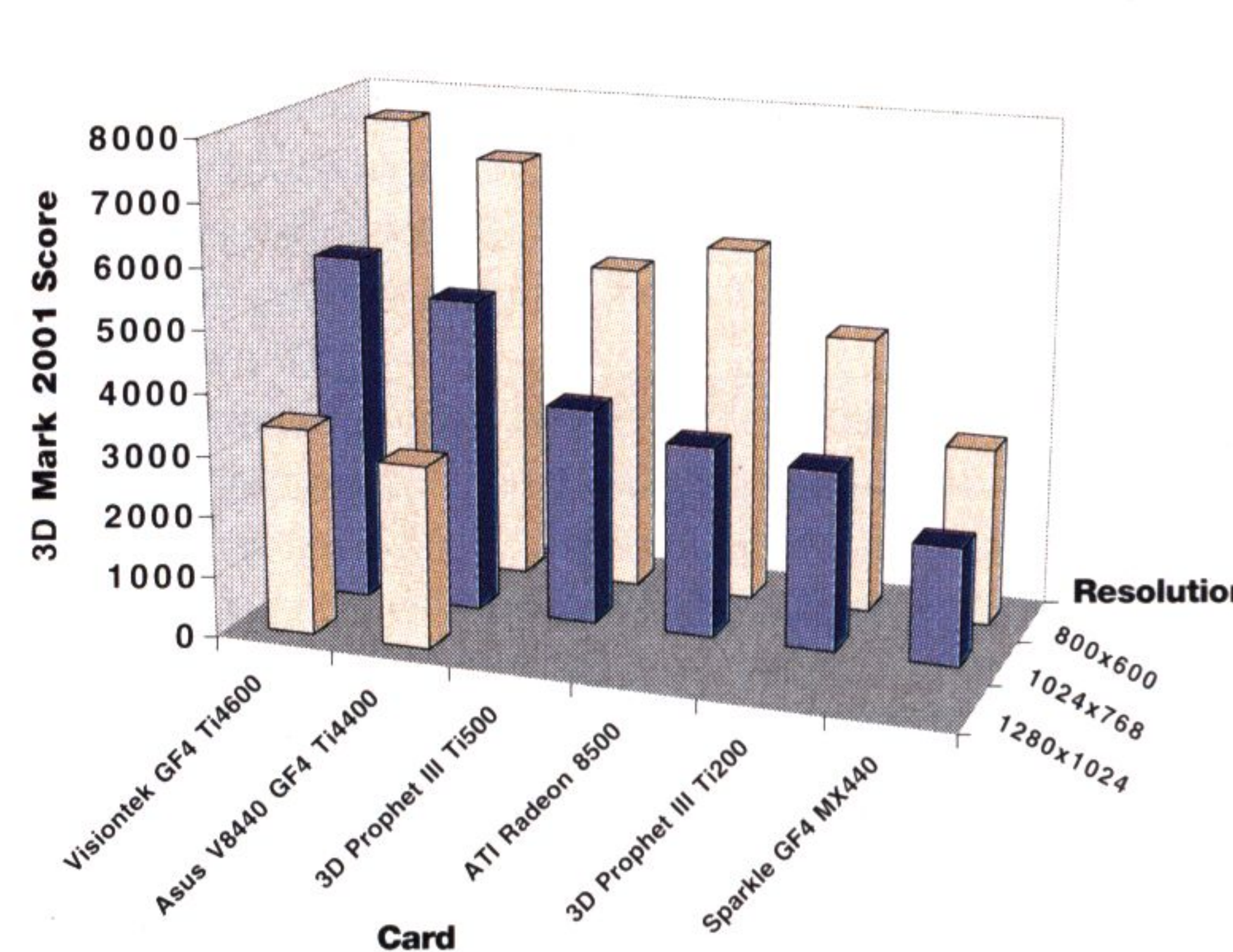
3D MARK 2001 NO FSAA



3D MARK 2001 2X FSAA



3D MARK 2001 4X FSAA





CREATIVE LABS MEGAWORKS 510D

■ Manufacturer: Creative Labs | Price: £349 | Phone: N/A | www.europe.creative.com

Meaty, beaty, big and bouncy – Creative's hefty new 5.1 system packs an impressive punch...

WHEN a box arrives on your doorstep carried by a man who's just suffered a double rupture, you know there's something 'very special' inside. In this case, there were five little special things and one thumping great big one. Guessed yet? (Oh, you saw the picture.)

Creative launches a direct attack on the high-end computer audio market with the release of MegaWorks 510D, a fully specified 5.1 audio system designed for use with any sound source with analogue line level outputs for front left and right, surround left and right, centre and subwoofer channels. It also supports the six-channel digital connection from the SoundBlaster Live! 5.1 or Audigy soundcards.

LOUD AS YOU LIKE

The subwoofer is a large square box with no port, the eight-inch driver unit facing the floor, protected by a substantial grille. It also carries the amplification for all six speakers and all input/output connections. The sub itself is rated at a hefty

150W RMS, with all five satellites at 70W, placing it in a similar loudness bracket to the Klipsch ProMedia series and VideoLogic Sirocco Crossfire 4.1 gaming system. The satellites are small but with deep, curved enclosures. They carry a single

driver unit, unlike both the Klipsch and Sirocco sats, which have both woofers and tweeters. Given that high frequencies seem marginally light on these satellites, it seems odd there's a switch on the sub to reduce treble still further.

How does it all sound? In a word: fantastic. This is by far and away the best speaker system released by Creative Labs from its Cambridge Soundworks division. We tested the speakers in a variety of applications, from music through games to full 5.1 DVD playback. While the high end is noticeably less crisp than our Crossfires, the mid-bass is very well rounded thanks to the larger satellite driver and deeper enclosure employed. This is excellent for gaming and DVD in particular, and gives a more 'musical' effect than the harsher but arguably more 'accurate'

sounding Crossfires. To my ears, these speakers have more in common with the Klipsch ProMedia that we rate as our Best Buy.

The subwoofer is mighty powerful, with a separate control for level. Turning this up seemed to do little more than muddy the sound in our test room, so we stuck with the default setting.

YOU MAKE THE ROCKIN' WORLD GO ROUND

We couldn't tell the difference between the digital and analogue inputs when driven from an Audigy, though Creative claims that SoundBlaster Live! 5.1 owners will get much better results from the digital input. What is undeniable, however, is that this system is the best high-end desktop 5.1 system we've yet heard – we've reviewed the Klipsch 4.1 system but have yet to see the 5.1 version, which in

any case we'd expect to be more expensive than the MegaWorks 510D in the UK. VideoLogic has no 5.1 system based on the Crossfire platform, and its DigiTheatre 5.1 systems are in a bracket below this, so are not comparable.

If you're an out-and-out gamer, then perhaps this system is overkill as you really don't need 5.1 compatibility – 4.1 is quite enough, in which case Sirocco Crossfire or Klipsch ProMedia 4.1 may be better value. But for great gaming and DVD performance, Creative has this piece of the market by the short and curlies and we doff our hats to them... **PW**

MULTI-CHANNEL ANTICS

SO WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 4.0, 4.1 AND 5.1? WE TELL YOU

Though strictly speaking this is an over-simplification, the **X.X** descriptive term for speaker systems refers to the number of satellite speakers and subwoofers a particular set-up has. In the case of soundcards, it describes the outputs in the same way, though bear in mind that no soundcard has a dedicated subwoofer output unless it's a 5.1 card designed to output DVD soundtracks. In other cases, the soundcard will

send full-range signals to the speaker set, which will then split out the low frequencies and send them to the subwoofer. In this way, a 4.0 soundcard is actually usually played back on a 4.1 speaker arrangement. As a gamer, you really only need a 4.0 soundcard and 4.1 speaker set unless you want to be able to play DVDs, in which case you need a 5.1 soundcard and 5.1 speaker set.

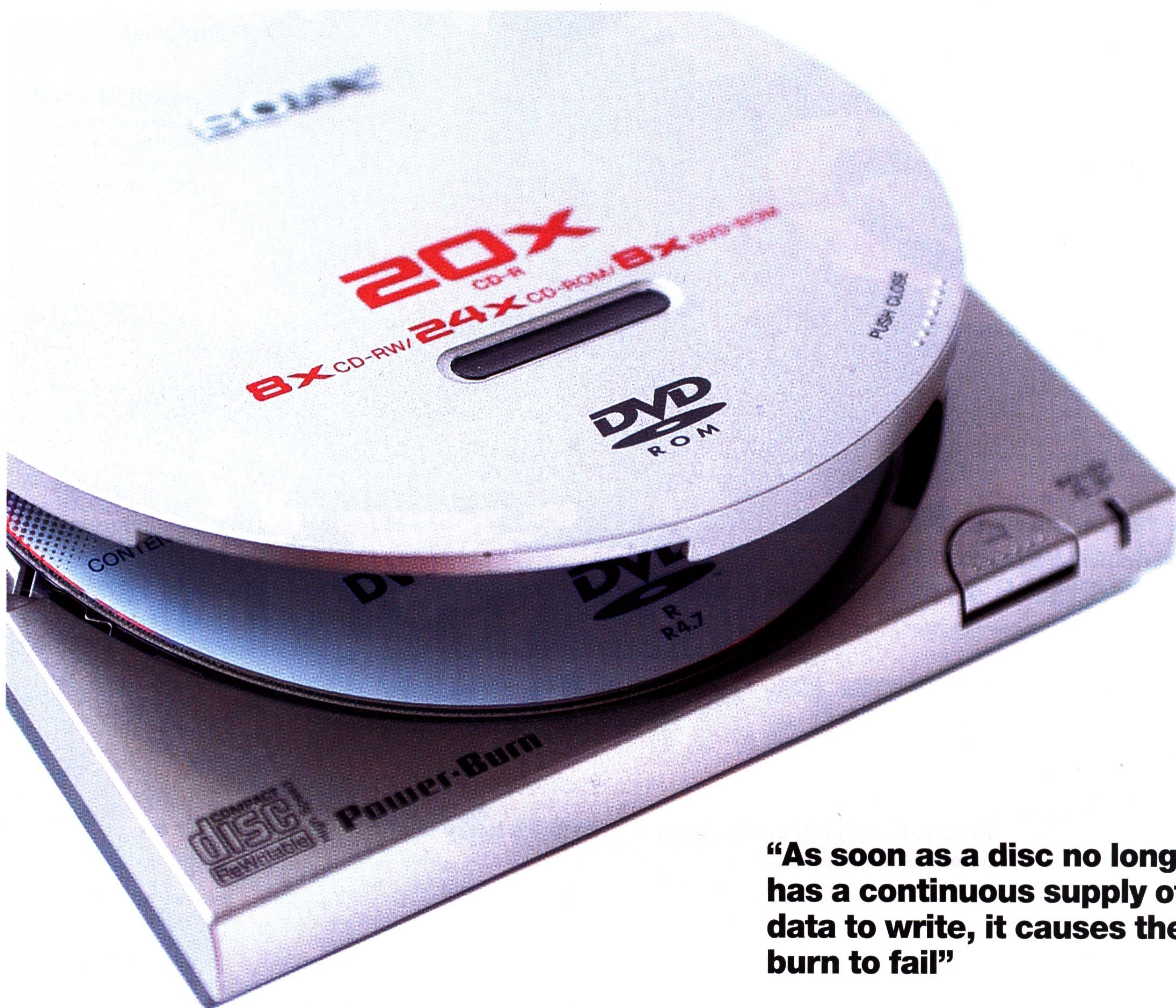
**PCZONE
VERDICT**

90

The sexiest subs you're ever gonna get near

BURN BABY BURN

Four CD ReWriters, three DVD, two turtledoves and a partridge in a pear tree.
Tim Ponting hallucinates his way through a burner group test



“As soon as a disc no longer has a continuous supply of data to write, it causes the burn to fail”

CD BURNERS have come a long way since I first spent an hour watching a progress bar cross the screen, only to suffer the silver platter being spat out. Followed by the Blue Screen of Death.

Gradually, CD-R writers became speedier and more reliable, though woe betide the burn-meister who tried to open an Internet Browser while creating a disc. CD-Rs were joined by CD-RW, allowing users to re-write the same discs thousands of times over. So-called ‘packet writing’ utilities allow users to format and use the CD-RW like a floppy.

Of course, the moment DVD-ROM drives arrived, users began to salivate at the thought of a rewritable DVD format. Unlike the DVD video format, which became standardised after early scrapping between the major consumer electronics players, there are a number of competing standards for recordable DVD. (See the DVD panel overleaf for more information.)

Today’s CD and DVD recording devices are a far cry from the early days of CD writing, where an endless stream of coffee mats were churned out by drives that lasted months rather than years. After this

group test, I was astonished by just how effective every single drive proved to be. In fact, the choice of bundled software is in many cases the most important decision you’ll make.

This is in large part thanks to the development of a set of similar technologies to prevent so-called ‘buffer underruns’ (BUR). Every CD writer has a small amount of memory (typically between 2Mb and 8Mb) that it uses to store data before writing to the disc. This ensures that small interruptions in the flow of data from the source to the writer don’t result in the drive having nothing to burn on the

disc. As soon as a disc no longer has a continuous supply of data to write, it causes the burn to fail. At higher burn speeds where a 2Mb buffer can be emptied in less than a third of a second, the drive manufacturers have needed to install more buffer memory or come up with a work-around.

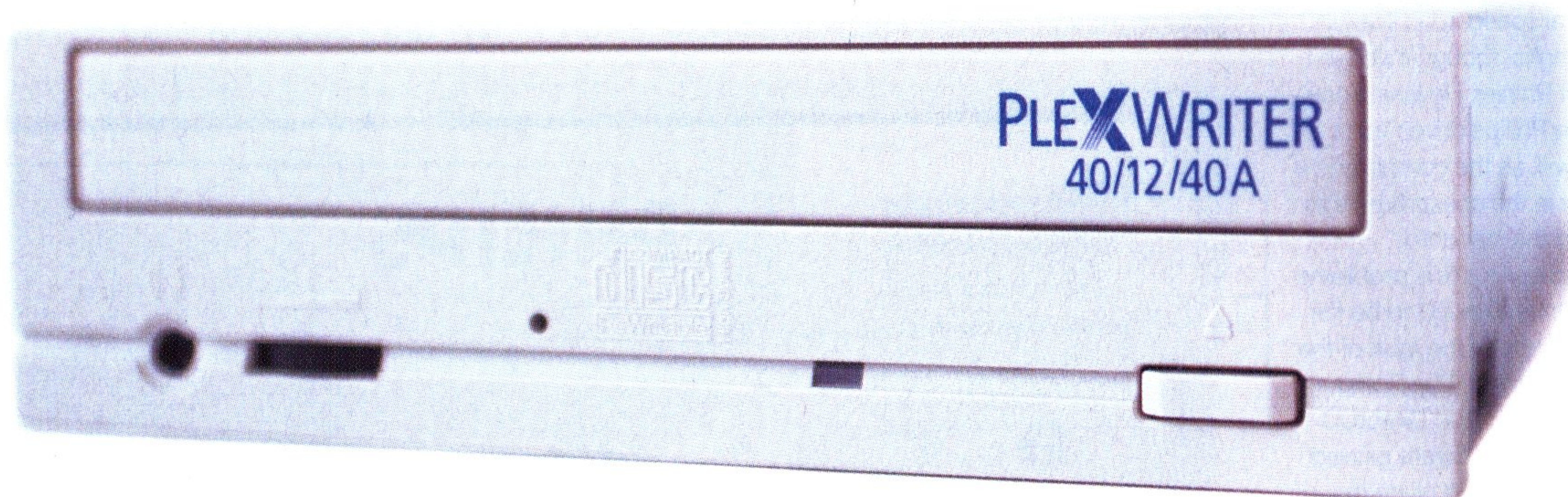
There are a number of different patented technologies, but they all work in a similar fashion. The drive and burner software co-operate to predict BURs before they occur. When a BUR is predicted, the drive intentionally stops burning, storing the exact place on the recording medium where it

needs to restart. When its buffer is full again, it recommences the burn at exactly the point it stopped, so the finished recording appears to a reader drive as if it had never been interrupted. Early versions of BUR avoidance weren’t as efficient as today – all drives these days have bulletproof systems, and all units reviewed worked seamlessly in testing.

We have full tests of seven drives here – four CD-RWs and three DVD+RWs, all of which we’d be quite happy to give a home to in any of our PCs. Without further ado, let’s slap ‘em on the ZONE bench.

PLEXTOR PX-W4012TA

■ Manufacturer: Plextor | Street Price: £138 inc VAT | Phone: 00 32 2 725 55 22 | www.plextor.com



We've always been fans of Plextor drives – I still use two ancient SCSI CD-Rs from the manufacturer myself. This one comes with the superb Nero 5 burning software – easily the best on the market. Unlike the other drives, it also has its own suite of software tools for ripping audio, copying CDs and so on.

The Plextor is a 40x Write, 12x ReWrite and 40x Read device. Of all the drives on test,

it offers the fastest write performance for CD-Rs of the bunch – finishing our 660Mb disc test at 40x in just three minutes and 20 seconds using a Zone CLV system (see Philips review). But the returns seem to be diminishing. Once we ran out of Plextor CD-Rs supplied with the drive (which handled 40x quite happily), we used TDK 32x media – and at that speed, the same disc image was created

just ten seconds slower. It reinforces the belief that once you get above a certain theoretical speed, the performance improvement is marginal. It also tested the effectiveness of the BURN-Proof buffer underrun system, as at 40 speed every CD burned suffered between one and five BUR messages from Nero – though, of course, the discs were all hunky-dory in the end.

As a 12x ReWriter, the drive's performance slipped behind that of the evergreen 12x Yamaha CRW3200 when copying files, but was the fastest at formatting CD-RW media. Not a lot in it then.

So why do we give this drive Best Buy status? It's the fastest out there, plus as reliable as you can get, even at high speeds. It scores 100 per cent in the Nero audio extraction tests, has a special 4x audio burn mode

called VariRec and can adjust the maximum recording speed automatically by checking the quality of CD-R media inserted (PowerRec II). It's expensive, but so's a Rolls Royce.

PCZONE VERDICT **92**
Fast, great technology and good software

YAMAHA CRW3200E-VK

■ Manufacturer: Yamaha | Street Price: £112 inc VAT | Phone: N/A | www.yamaha-it.de



Yamaha has long been associated with high quality, high-performance drives, and this one is no exception. Like the Plextor, it is bundled with Nero 5 and uses InCD for packet-writing mode – where you can drag and drop files to CD-RW as if it were a floppy drive.

As a 24x Write, 12x ReWrite and 40x Read device, it's similar to the Plextor except in terms of write performance. However, interestingly, writing our test CD-R took just 27 seconds

longer at 24x than the Plextor at 40x. Its ReWrite performance was the best of the bunch, though it took marginally longer to format a CD-RW than the Plextor. This may be down to its P-CAV recording mode at high speeds (see Philips review).

It's the only drive in the group test that supports the new Mt Rainier CD-RW standard – though no Operating System supports this yet, Windows XP soon will. It basically improves on the proprietary packet-writing

systems like InCD, DirectCD and B's Clip by building defect management into the drive and allowing formatting to take place 'on the fly', removing the need for the current long format times for blank media. There are other advantages, but we'll cross that bridge in a future article when support for the technology is more widespread.

The Yamaha drive also features a special 4x audio CD burning mode, which takes more space on a blank CD-R

for a given amount of music (an '80-minute' CD will hold just 68 minutes of AudioMaster music), but the results are excellent. I compared my own tracks recorded in my studio at home burned on a CD using AudioMaster against a CD burned at 4x without AudioMaster, and the improvement is noticeable. It also features a similar media quality testing system to the Plextor to determine the optimum write speed.

All in all, the CRW is a superb product, and at this price with these features beats all-comers in its price range. Best Budget drive it may be, but it's so close to the Best Buy Plextor that for most users this will prove a better buy.

PCZONE VERDICT **91**
Superb quality at a great price

PHILIPS PCRW2412K

■ **Manufacturer:** Philips | **Street Price:** £83 inc VAT | **Phone:** 01756 702 892 | www.ce.philips.com

Philips' CD-RW contender has an identical speed specification to the Yamaha, though it doesn't feature Mt Rainier. However, next-generation Philips drives most certainly will, as the company is a key player in the consortium that developed the standard.

We had quite a few problems with this drive, though to be fair they were entirely the fault of the bundled software. The Roxio EasyCD Creator and DirectCD packet-writing software proved impossible to install using the Autorun set-up routine, though once installed manually and patched with the latest drivers from the Roxio website, it worked fine.

This drive proves to be the CD read performance star. The drives tested use one of three read modes. CAV (Constant Angular Velocity) spins the CD at the same speed, hence the data is read slowly near the spindle and only at maximum speed at the edge of the disc. CLV

(Constant Linear Velocity) changes the spin rate of the CD so the data passes the read head at a constant speed. Finally, P-CAV (Partial Constant Angular Velocity), keeps the spin speed constant in the inner portion of the disc, while dropping it gradually as the head moves to the outside of the CD – giving a more even performance across the whole disc.

Philips' P-CAV read mode gives a better average speed than any other drive, though the CAV drives are very close behind. However, in ReWrite mode, the drive was slower both in formatting and copying than the comparable Yamaha drive, and also on the CD-R burn test.

This drive proved as reliable as both the Yamaha and Plextor

in the Audio Extraction test, which is a big plus. It's also a pretty cheap option, so runs a close second to the Yamaha as far as value is concerned. If only it had been supplied with Nero, and had shown better overall writing performance, it could have made Best Budget. Comes pretty damn close though...

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **85**
**Cheap but extremely
cheerful**

SONY CRX85U

■ **Manufacturer:** Sony | **Street Price:** £269 inc VAT | **Phone:** 00800 2623 7669 | www.sonyisstorage.com



Unlike the other drives on test here, this tiny Sony drive is an external USB 2.0 device. While it purports to work under USB 1.1 (the current-generation standard carried by most desktop PCs), life is too short and 1.1 too flaky

to take it seriously as an interface option for a drive of this cost. Bear in mind that very few PCs have USB 2.0 as standard, and you may have to follow in our footsteps and buy a

USB 2.0 interface card – which set us back around 60 quid.

If you think small is beautiful, the CRX85U is simply gorgeous. The effect is somewhat spoilt by a large, custom USB interface cable termination and a separate

power supply, but nevertheless it was cooed over by all techoids who came into contact with it.

The drive is a combo DVD-ROM reader/CD-RW unit, capable of writing discs 20x using the Zone CLV system (another P-CAV style variant), ReWrite at 8x speed, Read at 24x and DVD Read at up to 8x. Initially, we had no end of grief getting the drive to run using B's CLIP packet writer. It turned out that the drive worked as long as the software wasn't updated to the latest version – weird!

CD-RW format time was slow, though packet-writing performance was excellent – better than the 'faster' Philips CD-RW in fact. CD-R performance seemed on the slow side, as it failed to match even the

DVD-ReWriters' 12x mode, which seems especially odd as it uses a high-tech writing mode. Gladiator ran seamlessly using the supplied PowerDVD 3.0.

At a street price of around £270, this is clearly aimed at techies with money as well as CDs to burn. It's beautiful, granted, and as an add-on for a sleek USB notebook quite perfect. For you lot? Nah.

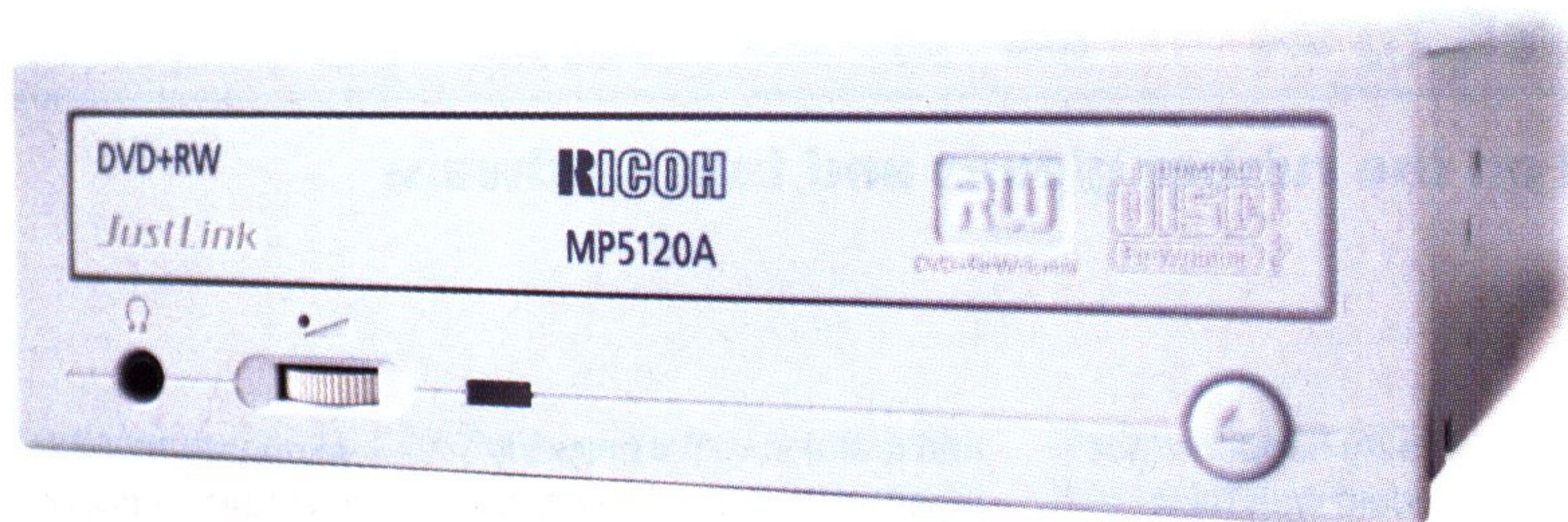
TESTS

▲ Test carried out on an Intel D845BG/P4 2.2GHz machine under Windows XP Home. Nero Speed Test/Nero audio test CD image shipped with Nero 5 used for read testing; custom file copy tests for CD-R/RW and DVD+RW used. All software bundled upgraded to latest downloadable versions except for the Sony CRX85U drive.

**PCZONE
VERDICT** **69**
**Beautiful but too
expensive**

RICOH MP5120A-DP

■ Manufacturer: Ricoh | Street Price: £381 inc VAT | Phone: 020 8261 4031 | www.ricoh.co.uk

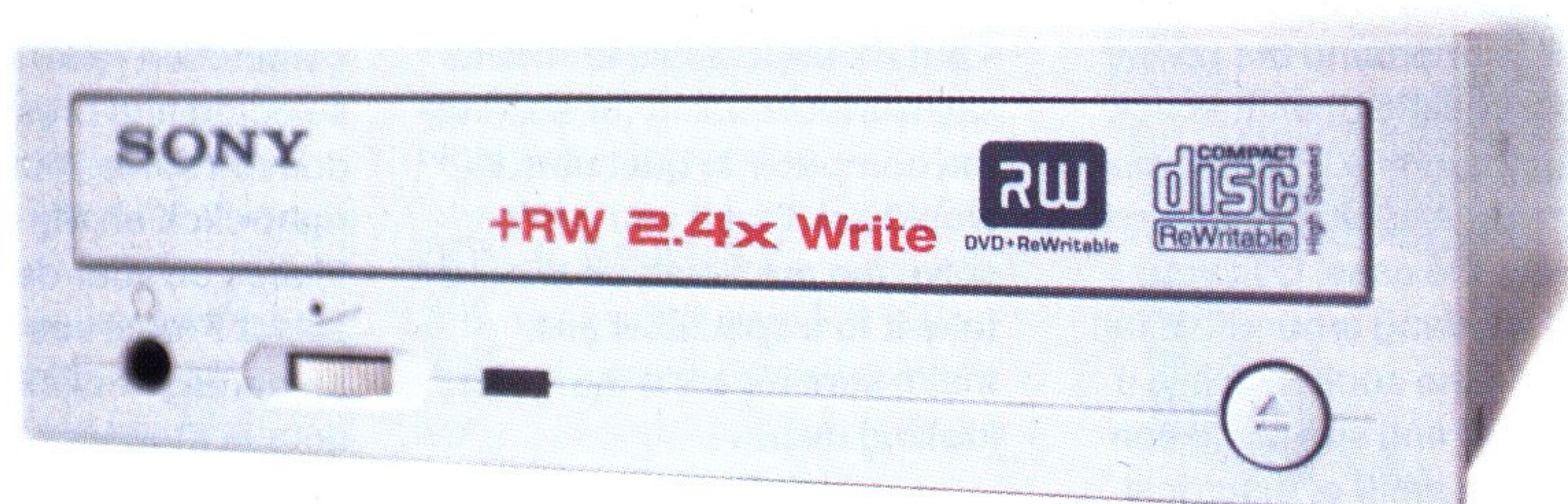


**PCZONE
VERDICT** **82**

A quality drive, although
hardly spectacular.
Good software though

SONY DRU-110A

■ Manufacturer: Sony | Street Price: £339 inc VAT | Phone: 00800 2623 7669 | www.sonyisstorage.com

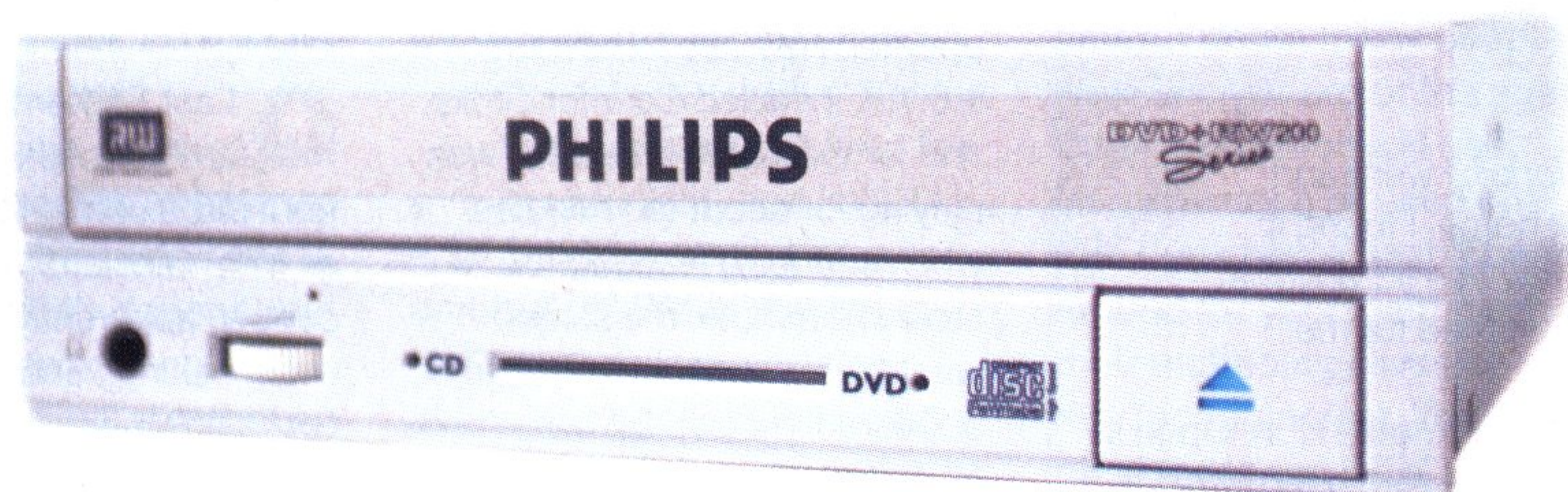


**PCZONE
VERDICT** **82**

As above, basically, but
slightly cheaper if you
buy online

PHILIPS DVD RW208K

■ Manufacturer: Philips | Street Price: £388 inc VAT | Phone: 01756 702 892 | www.ce.philips.com



**PCZONE
VERDICT** **83**

Edges it thanks to
bundled Nero/InCD,
though marginally
pricier

▲ The birth of writable DVD has been a painful one. There are actually five different discs formats: DVD-RAM, DVD-R(A), DVD-R(G), DVD-RW, DVD-RAM and DVD+RW. And a sixth is soon to arrive: DVD+R.

DVD-RAM, DVD-RW and DVD+RW are all ReWritable formats. The first has been around for a while, uses caddies for discs and is generally considered ideal for data storage. However, most DVD video players won't run discs mastered on a DVD-RAM drive. DVD-RW has wider compatibility with consumer players, but the king of the hill is DVD+RW, a latecomer but by far the quickest, most compatible for a wide variety of applications and generally painless DVD ReWrite option.

The 'write once' format DVD-R is divided into 'Authoring' and 'General' disc specification, each incompatible

with the other: you can't record a 'G' disc in an 'A' drive. DVD+R is closely related to DVD+RW, though concerns are surfacing that current-generation DVD+RW drives like those tested here will be unable to write to DVD+R discs – a major blow if it proves true. You've been warned – make sure if you buy one of these drives, it's guaranteed to burn DVD+Rs, with an upgrade the firmware of the drive itself.

All three are 2.4x DVD+RW drives, and according to Ricoh, all three use Ricoh innards. As the Sony drive is identical to the Ricoh and is bundled with similar software, we tested them as a pair. The Philips drive looks markedly different on the outside at least, and uses different software, so warranted its own tests.

Interestingly, the preparation time for DVD+RW discs is very quick – the

Ricoh/Sony averaging one minute 27 seconds, and the Philips one minute 12 seconds. Copying our massive test file array in packet-writing mode took a fairly hefty 29.5 minutes on the Ricoh/Sony/B's Clip combo, with the Philips/InCD combo a little quicker.

CD (12x) and CD-RW (10x) writing performance of all three drives is almost identical and more than adequate against CD-RW drives of similar specification. All the drives struggled with the Nero audio extraction tests, the Ricoh and Sony failing to complete and the Philips showing a few errors. DVD performance proved excellent for all three drives.

As DVD+RW drives, all three are ideal for digital video camera users wishing to burn their efforts to DVD for storage. (In most cases, this will mean

sitting around grumpily watching the chief geek run hours and hours of footage of granny's trip to the hospital to get her hip replaced.) The software bundled, MyDVD, is fabulously easy to use, and of course you can construct a professional-looking DVD for use in conventional players, complete with proper menus and scene selection graphics.

So should you buy one of these drives? Prices are dropping rapidly, so you'd definitely be an 'early adopter' if you pile in now. However, they are incredibly useful for back-up – far more practical than a pile of CD-Rs – and if home movies are your thing (even that kind of home movie), they can be recommended. Just check they'll burn DVD+Rs before you part with your cash; if not, wait until the next-gen drives arrive.



DEAR WANDY

It's time for Wandy to don his white coat, pull on the rubber gloves and talk hardware

■ QUACK Phil Wand

LET IT ALL OUT

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type-thing.

Write to Dear Wandy, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Email Address your letters to us at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'. Please note: while we can assure you that we read absolutely every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Sorry.

FZZZZZT!

Q Please can you help me? My computer is randomly resetting itself. I hear a small sound that sounds like static, similar to when you touch a TV, and then it will reset. It does this about once every 20 minutes and it's preventing me from doing any work – never mind playing any games. I have a 1GHz Athlon, 256Mb RAM and a Matrox G400 graphics card. Is it something to do with overheating?

Nick Harvey

A It's unlikely you'll ever hear the symptoms of overheating. Your PC getting hot under the collar will be a far more gradual process, with odd errors, bizarre system behaviour and frozen desktops impeding your gaming before anything

seriously nasty happens (not that you should wait for it to get this far, as you risk permanent damage to your CPU). No, fizzing and crackling noises are almost certainly related to power supply and electrics. My guess is that you have a loose wire either in or around the power supply unit (PSU) at the back of your machine. Pull out the 240V mains cable from where it meets the case. Can you smell anything around the fan or inside the socket? Have a good sniff and see if you can detect the whiff of electrical burning – it will hang around long after the event that caused it. If you can, stop using your machine right away and get the PSU replaced. If there ain't no stink, try changing the mains cable

and make sure it's properly inserted. It needs to fit snugly and shouldn't wobble. I must say that there are many possibilities here – for example, the sound you describe could actually be coming from your PC speakers and not the PC itself – but it's impossible for me to say without seeing (or sniffing) the computer in question. I would ask that if you can't solve the problem you should take it to a specialist and make sure it gets a thorough looking over.

XTRA PANTS

Q I have a major problem with *Half-Life* at present. I've recently installed the game onto my PC as I've just bought Windows XP. To begin with, it all seemed to be going fine. I updated *Half-Life* to version 1.0.1.8, installed *Counter-Strike*, and jumped onto a server. I was playing for about ten minutes when suddenly I lagged for around a minute, the screen went black, and this message appeared in a pop-up box: NET_SendPacket ERROR: WSAEINTR. Then *Counter-Strike* crashed out. This never happened until I installed Windows XP, so I'm guessing it's that. I also have a problem of my modem occasionally disconnecting when I run programs. My computer is an AMD Athlon 800MHz with 256Mb RAM and a RIVA TNT2. I have a generic Soft56K Internal modem.

Dean Delicata

A WSAEINTR is a WinSock error, generated by socket components within Windows. These components allow applications to communicate with other machines over a network, and the error you describe indicates an interrupted system call – it affects a great many gamers using Windows XP. There are a couple of things you can do to try and

eliminate this. First, go to the Internet Options control panel (you can get here either by opening the Control Panels folder or by selecting Internet Options under the Tools menu in Internet Explorer), and click the Connection tab at the top. Make sure the 'Never dial a connection radio' button is selected and press OK. If this doesn't solve your trouble, right-click on My Network Places on your desktop and select Properties from the menu. Right-click on your default modem connection, select Properties again, and then uncheck the QoS Packet Scheduler entry in the list of connection items. This should get you going again, and I'll resist the strong urge to rant about Microsoft and XP.

HOT OR NOT?

Q Last September I bought an AMD Athlon 1.3GHz from dabs.com. I fitted it with an MTS Glaciator heat sink (all copper, apparently great for overclocking), and my Gigabyte GA-7DXR motherboard has its own onboard temperature monitor that I can access in



Processors aren't made from combustible material. They just melt.

"The whiff of electrical burning will hang around long after the event that caused it"



Don't mess with electricity. It doesn't like people.

MEDAL OF HONOR

Having played the demo of *Medal Of Honor*, I went and bought the full version. Once I got back home, I found it locked up the whole time. These are a few tips for anyone unable to get it to work – because they worked for me.

1. Open your Control Panel and find the Multimedia icon. Open it and look for Preferred playback device on the Audio tab – make sure that the selected device matches your sound card. Now look in the lower part of the dialog and be sure that Use only preferred devices is checked. Click OK.
2. Try lowering your audio hardware acceleration. Run the DirectX diagnostic tool by clicking on your Start button, selecting Run, typing dxdiag and pressing Enter. Select the Sound tab and locate the Sound Acceleration Level slider. Drag it down to its Basic setting. If it's already there, try raising it to Full. There is no need to reboot for the change to take effect, so close Dxdiag and try running the game again.
3. Make sure that you have closed all programs and tasks, because sometimes one of these can conflict with the game. Background stuff like anti-virus programs, instant messengers or defrag tools are often the cause of much trouble.
4. Go to www.nvidia.com and download and install the Detonator drivers for Windows 95/98/ME or whatever system OS you have – assuming you're using a GeForce based card. Go to www.microsoft.com/directx to download the latest version of DirectX and install it.

If all goes well, you should now be able to play the game without it hanging.

Jon

Each issue I'll divulge one of my top tips, unless you can do better. Send 'em to the address above, and if I think the tip is top enough I'll print it and send you £50.

£50
WINNER!

"If your PC's tucked in a corner, cooling fans aren't going to cool – they're going to pump hot air round in circles"

Windows 98. My start-up CPU temperature is 54C, but this quickly rises to an idle temperature of around 62-63C. Under load it can get as high as 67-75C (the system remains a constant 30C). I have been informed that these are too high for a 1.3GHz Athlon, and that the average should be around 45C, with up to 50C under load. Any higher and you risk severely shortening the life of the chip. I have three case fans for ventilation, which provide the case with a decent enough airflow. I have tried nearly everything I can think of, including cleaning and re-applying the thermal paste, with no luck. Is the problem likely to be a faulty processor? It has cooked up these temperatures since I bought it, and I haven't played around with overclocking. Any advice on the matter would be most appreciated.

Alex Cicciu

A When it comes to baking Athlons, the advice you'll get will vary wildly depending on who you talk to. Cooling aficionados will tell you that 75C is dangerous, and that your PC is about to turn into a fireball and scorch your trousers. I will tell you that 75C is indeed high for an Athlon, but it's not fatal. I've heard of higher numbers for 1.3GHz chips – the fact you haven't mentioned your machine playing up tells me it's not going to expire on you just yet (in fact, it suggests that your Gigabyte motherboard may simply not be reporting the correct temperature). Remember that any readings are down to not only the warmth generated by the CPU, but also the machine's surroundings. If you have it in a hot room, or tucked away in a corner, cooling fans aren't going to cool – they're going to pump hot air round in circles. What you need is breathing space around your case, so

make sure it's not underneath anything or pushed up against a wall, and leave a window open when you're using it – it may seem a daft idea but it can have a drastic effect. Since you're using Windows 98, I'd have a gander at CPUIdle from www.cpuidle.de. This is a software-based cooling solution and comes highly recommended.

IT'S A BEAUTY

Q I own a Pentium PIII 733 with an ATI Rage Pro 16Mb card. This card is so bad that games like *Half-Life* and *Counter-Strike* slow down – not to mention *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and *AvP2*. Recently I preordered a GeForce4 Ti4600 128Mb card without hearing or seeing any news about it beforehand. I thought if anyone knew something about it you would.

Sean Peyton

A Nobody ever got fired for buying IBM, and NVIDIA is to graphics what IBM is to computers. When you buy a GeForce card, you can be almost certain that it'll be as reliable as it is rapid – and benchmarks show it to be very rapid indeed.

ENLARGEMENT REQUIRED

Q I currently have a Cyrix MII-300 processor with 64Mb RAM and a 3Dfx Voodoo3 2000 graphics card, all running under Windows 98. I have a major problem with playing games on it in regards to smoothness. Explosions, big gunfights, or simply just going outdoors into large environments causes gameplay to get extremely jerky, up to the point where I just give up, quit the game and turn off the computer. When I say this, I mean games such as *Half-Life*, *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III Arena*. This problem is persistent and drives me completely insane. Attempting to play the latest games such as *Medal Of*

Honor or Return To Castle Wolfenstein is simply impossible. Any help you could give me would be much appreciated.

David Stewart



David Stewart's Cyrix would find this pot something of a challenge.

A There's no getting away from the fact that your system is rather behind the times. I doubt many people have even heard of the aged Cyrix processor you use, let alone seen or used one (the Cyrix name hasn't been around for years, although their technology lives on at VIA Technologies). You also need twice the RAM and a modern video card – the Voodoo3 2000 wasn't too awe-inspiring even when new. My suggestion would be to keep this system for your mum or dad, and then shop around for a 1GHz+ system with 256Mb RAM, a GeForce2 and, if possible, Windows 2000 Professional. You needn't spend more than £500 for a more than desirable setup.

RADEON OR GEFORCE4?

Q Unfortunately, I have no decent computer with which to play the great games you review. I've seen a PC that I think I might buy, but I don't know what graphics card to get. Should I get an ATI Radeon

8500, or wait for a GeForce4 Ti4600 – and if so, do you know when it will be released? I don't know what to do and any help would be most appreciated.

Robin Ewing

A The GeForce4 shades the Radeon 8500 when it comes to raw performance. Even though the spanking fast NVIDIA card appears to be an advancement of the existing GeForce3 range, rather than a radical new approach with new technology incorporated at every level, benchmarks suggest the card can be one and a half times faster than the Radeon 8500 and almost three times faster than a GeForce2. There are two versions of the card available, the Ti 4600 (300MHz core, 325MHz DDR) and the Ti 4400 (275MHz core, 275MHz DDR). A lesser version of the hardware, the Ti 4200 (225MHz core, 250MHz DDR) should be more affordable and on the market by the time you read this.


COMPATIBILITY MODE

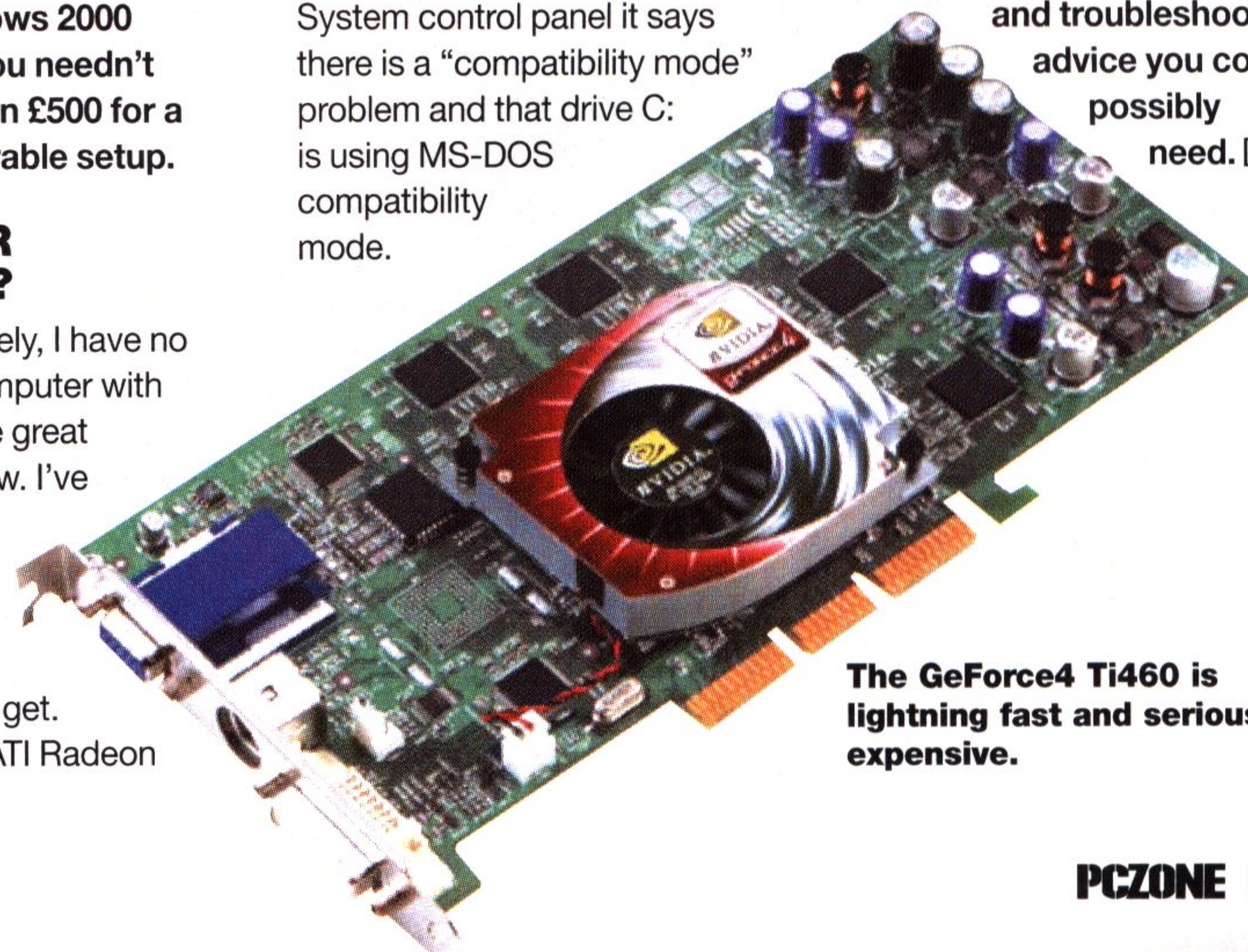
Q I have a 1.3GHz Pentium IV with a 60Gb HDD, NVIDIA Geforce2 MX400 64Mb, with, DVD-ROM and 8x/4x CD/RW running Windows ME. The problem I have is that my DVD and CD drives are no longer working. I can't even find them in My Computer.

I've noticed that in the System control panel it says there is a "compatibility mode" problem and that drive C: is using MS-DOS compatibility mode.

Cursing the workings of all things computer-oriented, I decided to use PowerQuest Second Chance software to restore my computer to a time when it was working fine. Having run the program and restored the PC to a previous state when I knew the drives were working, I was mortified to find that the compatibility problem was still there.

Andy Spencer

A Compatibility mode used to be the bane of my existence when I was using Windows 95. And you know what? I never found a truly satisfactory explanation as to what was causing it: one day I noticed the error, and that, basically, was that. In your case, though, the answer may be more forthcoming. Microsoft's support documents on the subject of compatibility mode note that users of Windows Millennium Edition who have used PowerQuest's Drive Copy 2.0 to copy the contents of one hard disk to another may well run into this problem. You need to contact PowerQuest at www.powerquest.com for an updated version that supports Windows ME. If you still have trouble, try visiting search.support.microsoft.com/kb and search for compatibility mode – this provides all the information and troubleshooting advice you could possibly need. 



The GeForce4 Ti460 is lightning fast and seriously expensive.



WATCHDOG

We look forward to the day when all companies provide customers with good, solid service, but until that day, keep sending in those complaints...

■ **PLAYING IT STRAIGHT** Adam Phillips

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

Don't worry – we're here to help when you've reached the end of your tether. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog'

READ ME!

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and **contact number**. With PCs, make sure that you also include **all purchasing details** such as reference and invoice numbers.

SHATTERED

Pocket PCs are all the rage at the moment and the HP Jornada has been winning awards left, right and centre. That's why Tom Bowerman went out and bought one for £199 after being given Amazon vouchers.

He loved his new purchase, taking it with him wherever he went. Bless. But a month later it all went wrong. He arrived home with the Jornada in his inside jacket pocket and heard a 'pling' as he walked upstairs: "With a sinking feeling, I saw that a series of cracks had appeared on the screen of the 525 – radiating from a central point," recalls Tom. "I phoned the HP support number. All I got was an answerphone that asked for my 'customer number', which I hadn't got. After a few days of phoning, the answerphone finally disappeared, only for me to find the phone being picked up at the other end, then put down again. Marvellous."

After contacting other customer support departments within HP he finally managed to get through to someone on the original helpline. "I explained about the bizarre crack in the screen and stressed that this had happened even though I wasn't using the device at the time," said Tom. "The support person was very helpful, but said that they were doubtful that HP would accept the fault. I could, however, send the unit to them where it would be passed to their testing facility to determine the nature of the fault."

After sending it in he was told that the cracks were 'pressure cracks' and although Tom was adamant he hadn't applied any pressure he was told "politely but firmly that HP would not accept the fault and that my only option would be a screen repair and it would cost £160."

Not much point, seeing as that's almost as much as the original purchase price. We dropped HP a line who offered the following good news: "We would like to apologise for any inconvenience (*ie the customer*

support cock-ups, we assume – Watchdog) caused to Mr Bowerman and would like to offer him a replacement unit together with an HP colour accessory cover to protect the screen so as to prevent any future damage," said a spokesperson for the company.

They went on to explain that the damage to the unit was due to excessive external pressure to the screen and the warranty for the HP Jornada 525 Pocket PC doesn't normally cover this. They point out that all details concerning customer support and warranty information are listed on the CD-ROM that comes with the HP Jornada 525 Pocket PC.

A TINY PROBLEM

Matthew Herring paid £1,261 for a Tiny computer and paid an extra £259 for a 36 month on-site maintenance guarantee. Nearly two months ago, the computer broke down so he contacted Tiny for them to pick it up.

"Tiny PCs in need of repair that had been collected were being kept in a warehouse until Time decided what to do with them"

"They agreed a time and a date but, one hour before they were due to arrive, I received a phone call saying that they couldn't come because they didn't have the spare part needed – even though they hadn't even seen the PC by that point," explained Matthew. "This happened another three times."

Unfortunately, just before they were finally due to pick his PC up, Tiny went pear-shaped and was taken over by rival company Time. Matthew says that's when the problems really started.

"Time said that because Tiny had gone bankrupt, Time couldn't or wouldn't honour Tiny's guarantees. They said they'd pick the PC up for repair but, like Tiny before them, they cancelled twice at the last minute."

After many "heated" phone calls, Matthew eventually managed to get through to a supervisor who said that, "the Time directors had just decided that very day that all PCs bought with VISA cards would not be repaired by them."

When Matthew asked if they would have repaired it if they had picked it up when they said they would, he was told that all Tiny PCs in need of repair that had been collected were being kept in a warehouse until they decided what to do with them. Matthew was even told that people were only being informed of this if they phoned up to ask where their PC was.

"I am furious that such a big company thinks it can just get away with treating their customers like this," rages Matthew understandably. "If they didn't have the resources to deal with Tiny's problems, they shouldn't have taken them over. As it is, I and many others are being brushed aside."

We dropped Time a line to see if we could get some sense out of them. Here's what they had to say for themselves: "We are very sorry for the current frustrations that customers are suffering. Tiny Computers went into administration and caused the current, confused situation. We (The Time Group) then bought the business and some of the assets from the administrators. Please be assured that customers are our first priority and solving problems caused by Tiny's financial problems is our main objective."

Good to hear... so what about Matthew's specific case? "We are currently negotiating with the credit card companies to ensure that we can honour

support agreements. I'm afraid that this does take some time. We have every confidence that we will be able to provide support for these customers very soon. If we are unable to honour these agreements then Matthew will be able to claim for a refund from his credit card company so will not be out of pocket. Customers who paid cash need not worry in this situation. Please be assured that we are working 24/7 to get Tiny customer support back to normal during this difficult period."

Matthew, keep us informed of how your case progresses...

A DAB HAND

David Shield's been having problems with the new ASUSTEK A7V266-E motherboard. "I couldn't get my friend's Samsung CD-ROM to work properly with this new motherboard," explained David. "After searching on the Internet, I found out that a new BIOS was available which corrected the problem. Before doing this though, I read my manual thoroughly and cleared my CMOS following the precise instructions."

Unfortunately, having done this he was rewarded with a puff of smoke – something even all of us know isn't supposed to happen. David goes on, "I later found out that the instructions are wrong and that loads of others have done this as well, leaving us with mother-boards that don't keep their BIOS settings."

To say that David was a bit hacked off is something of an understatement. He e-mailed Dabs to inform them of this error so they could warn others who had purchased ASUS motherboards and so he could get a replacement.

After sending them some more details, they replied one whole week later with the following statement: "If you flashed your BIOS, your warranty is invalid." David informed them that he hadn't flashed his BIOS but cleared his CMOS. "I gave

THE ACCUSED

ebuyer.com

tiny

SiMPLY

dabs.com

GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT

“For weeks Stephen went back and forth with ClaraNet who wouldn’t budge or at times didn’t even bother to respond to him”

them information and links to the problem with this particular motherboard but I haven’t received a reply.”

So, Dabs, what do you have to say for yourselves? Don’t know your BIOS from your CMOS? “With the benefit of the additional information Mr Shields outlined in his letter to you, it does seem that we incorrectly identified the reason for the fault as being caused by flashing the BIOS, and therefore apologise for any confusion this caused,” offered a spokesperson for Dabs. “In such circumstances, it is normal procedure to advise that the customer’s action has invalidated the warranty, though we now recognise that this wasn’t the case.”

They say after reading your summary of how you cleared the CMOS, “we now have a better understanding of issue.” Unfortunately, they still maintain that your actions have invalidated the warranty. “However, in recognition of the frustration Mr Shields has experienced in dealing with Dabs on this issue, and to help bring it to a speedy resolve, we have now authorised a return and will forward the motherboard to Asus in Holland for repair accordingly. Expected turnaround time is in the order of 4-6 weeks.”

THE WAITING GAME

S H Binns had the misfortune of buying a broken ELSA Gladiac 920 graphics card from Simply.co.uk in December. He was told to “send it back for immediate replacement” which he duly did. The trouble is that this was a month ago and he still hasn’t received his replacement graphics card.

Simply says they received the card back from the customer on the February 1, and it was sent away for repair on February 4. “The customer was advised that the repair could take up to 30 days,” explained the company. “The customer called us to chase on March 4, and we refunded the customer the price

they paid for the card as it is now an obsolete item.”

They say it is probable that their returns department didn’t contact you to explain this, “hence he did not realise that he had his money back for the item. I will advise the returns department that in future, they should make sure that all customers are advised of the action they have taken to avoid this happening again.”

Mr Binns, please check your bank account to ensure that the money is indeed back where it should be.



The HP Jornada – the popular Pocket PC but one reader isn't happy...

UNCLEAR CLARA

Why does it take Watchdog to ensure that some companies stick to their own terms and conditions? Take Stephen Ashton – he signed up with ClaraNet back in October 1997. His reason? Because he could pay up front with a cheque for unlimited access at £99 plus VAT per year. Not a bad deal for those times.

Then in December 2001, he decided to upgrade to broadband and e-mailed ClaraNet saying that he was terminating his agreement and, in line with their terms and conditions, wanted a refund on the remainder of his account because he was paid up until October 15 2002.

No, came back the answer, you have to pay up to the end of the yearly contract like it says in our current terms and conditions. No, said Stephen, not according to the contract I signed up to back in 1997. For weeks Stephen went back and forth with ClaraNet who wouldn’t budge or at times didn’t even bother to respond to him. So he contacted us.

Off we went to ClaraNet who suddenly realised the error of their ways: “I can confirm that I have looked into this matter and organised for a refund to be sent to Mr Ashton in tonight’s post,” said a ClaraNet spokesperson. “In addition to the refund, I will be offering Mr Ashton a free Clarahost Soho web-hosting account as an apology for the inconvenience caused.”

About sodding time, eh? If anyone out there is experiencing similar problems, let us know...

ROYAL FAIL?

Ah, the joys of online ordering – place that order and hey presto, within a couple of days, you’ve got the game and usually at a reduced price. But alas, it’s not always that simple. But you knew that already. Take Simon Hodges. He ordered *Silent Hunter 2* for £21.99 from Gamer.uk.com and the order tracking system showed that the game would be shipped the next day.

The following day, he noted that the cash had been taken from his account. On February 2, and with no sign of the game, Simon called Gamer to find out where it was: “Their reply was to the effect that I should have received my game and that they would track its whereabouts with Royal Mail,” he told us.

On the 11th, he called again and Gamer informed him that they were still trying to locate the game and wouldn’t send out a replacement until the original one had turned up. Meanwhile, Simon decided to ask the Royal Mail to conduct a search for the game at his local delivery office – a pretty simple affair you would

have thought because the game was supposedly sent by recorded delivery.

“There was no return of any packages intended for me from 23rd January to that date, nor was there a recorded delivery item or any other package waiting for me,” explained Simon. So off he went to Gamer who informed him that they’d actually used a courier and didn’t use Royal Mail because they were unreliable. “Hmm, not what their website says,” according to Simon. To cut a long story short, Simon has contacted the company on several occasions since to find out what is going on with the courier – after all, it should be a very simple process for Gamer to find out what their courier is up to. But, alas, it’s been six weeks now, and Simon has yet to receive his copy of *Silent Hunter 2*.

So what the hell’s going on? grumbled Watchdog to Gamer: “We are sorry to learn that Mr Hodges did not receive his copy of *Silent Hunter 2*. This was sent by Royal Mail on the 24th

January,” stated a spokesperson for the company. “We have contacted Royal Mail who could not find the recorded reference number on their system but are sending us a claim form for the parcel.”

They have been advised that parcels that go missing/undelivered are sent to the Royal Mail’s Belfast office and opened. “This can take up to three months to be returned to sender,” claimed Gamer. “In the meantime, we shall e-mail Mr Hodges and offer to send another copy or, if required, a full refund. With well over 100,000 customers, errors are bound to occur sometimes. We offer our most sincere apologies to Mr Hodges and will be offering him some form of compensation.”

Great. Simon should have his game by now and a freebie of some kind. But what totally mystifies us is why was he told on several occasions that the order had been sent by courier when it hadn’t been. Clerical errors, eh? **EW**

O! E-BUYER! READ THIS!

While we all love special offers, there are times when perhaps unsurprisingly, it can all seem a bit too good to be true. Enter Matticus, who, on the 23rd of February took advantage of an offer advertised on E-Buyer, a Radeon 7500 for £59.20. He placed his order on the 25th of February, even though in the two days he waited there was now a ten day wait for the goods. “The day after that, the site informed me that there was a 25 day wait but I figured it was worth it.”

Trouble was that Matticus was told on the 28th that they were cancelling the order. He can only presume that E-Buyer put the product up at the wrong price and when they realised this, they withdrew the ‘76’ they had, putting a wait on in the hope that people would cancel.

Here at Watchdog, we think it’s important to get both sides to the story so we did try and drop the company a line. We rang their ‘Customer Support Line’ and had three options. Two of the three options basically said: “Oh, just go online” and then cuts you off. As for their main customer support option, we were told that we were in a queue and then put on hold. And then cut off on several occasions.

With any luck, some plucky E-Buyer employee might read this and do us the favour of asking their bosses to respond to your complaint which we will of course be happy to print next month... until then I’m afraid Mat, we’re going to have to put your complaint on hold. And then, of course, cut you off...

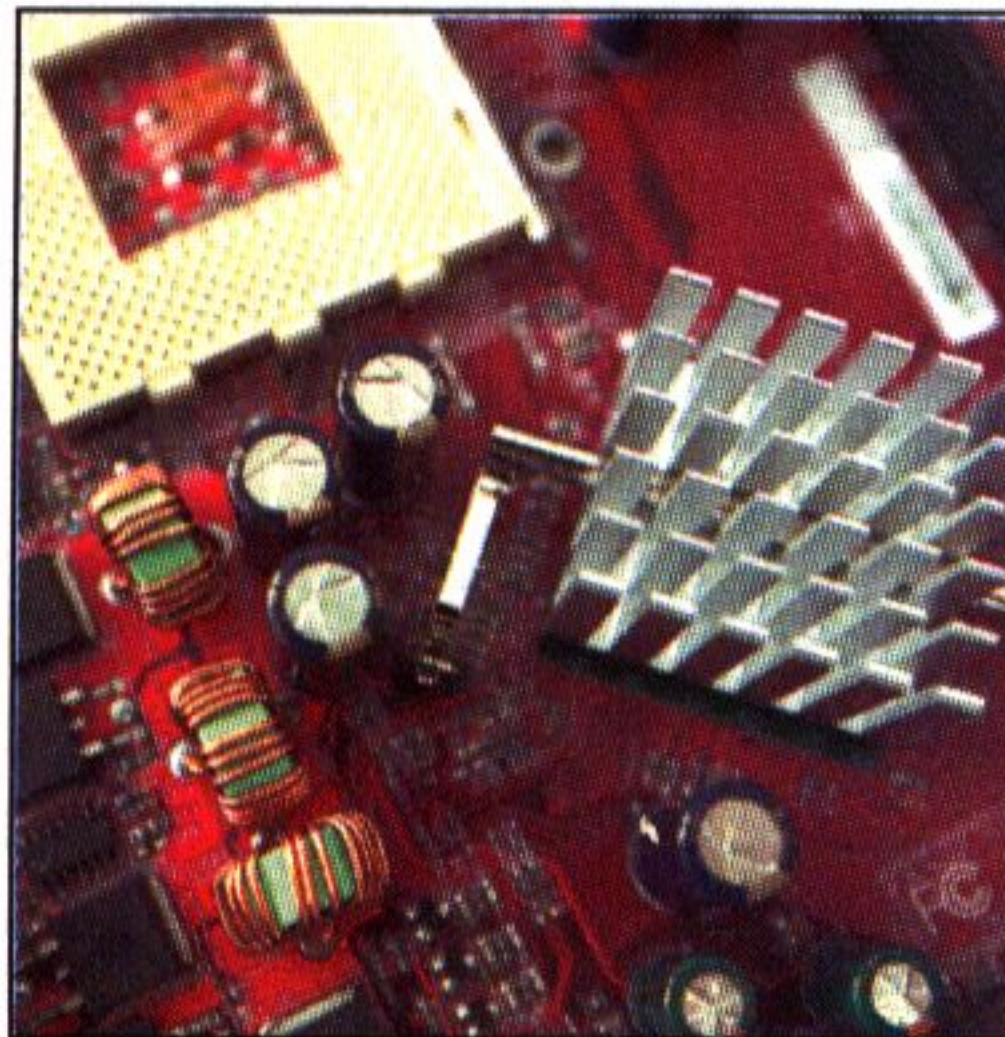
BUYER'S GUIDE

Are you looking to upgrade your PC? Since we've started this Buyer's Guide, prices have dropped consistently every month – and we'll keep on checking to ensure that this guide gives you the most accurate and up-to-date information. While we're on the subject, memory is dirt cheap as well – if you're still labouring with less than 128Mb RAM, buy some now

◀ BEST BUY

BEST BUDGET ▶

MOTHERBOARD



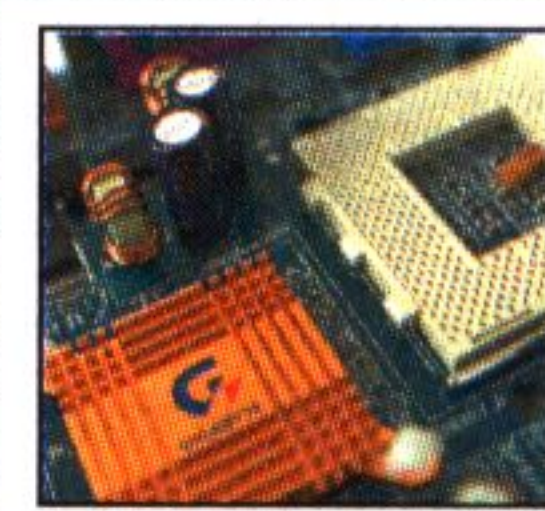
MSI K7N420 PRO

STREET PRICE £105 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A

MANUFACTURER MicroStar International
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

The Asus A7V266-E just gets edged off its deserved plinth by a motherboard featuring the NVIDIA nForce 420D chipset. In testing, the board showed superb performance in the crucial OpenGL and DirectX 8.1 tests. It has a number of optional extras, so check with the retailer about what to expect in the box you buy – integrated LAN, additional USB slots, TV out and digital audio out are all available. Bear in mind that if you have an old video card, you may not need a new one with this board – it has a GeForce 2 MX class GPU integrated into the Northbridge... for free! Bit of a bonus...

WAS
£122
NOW
£105

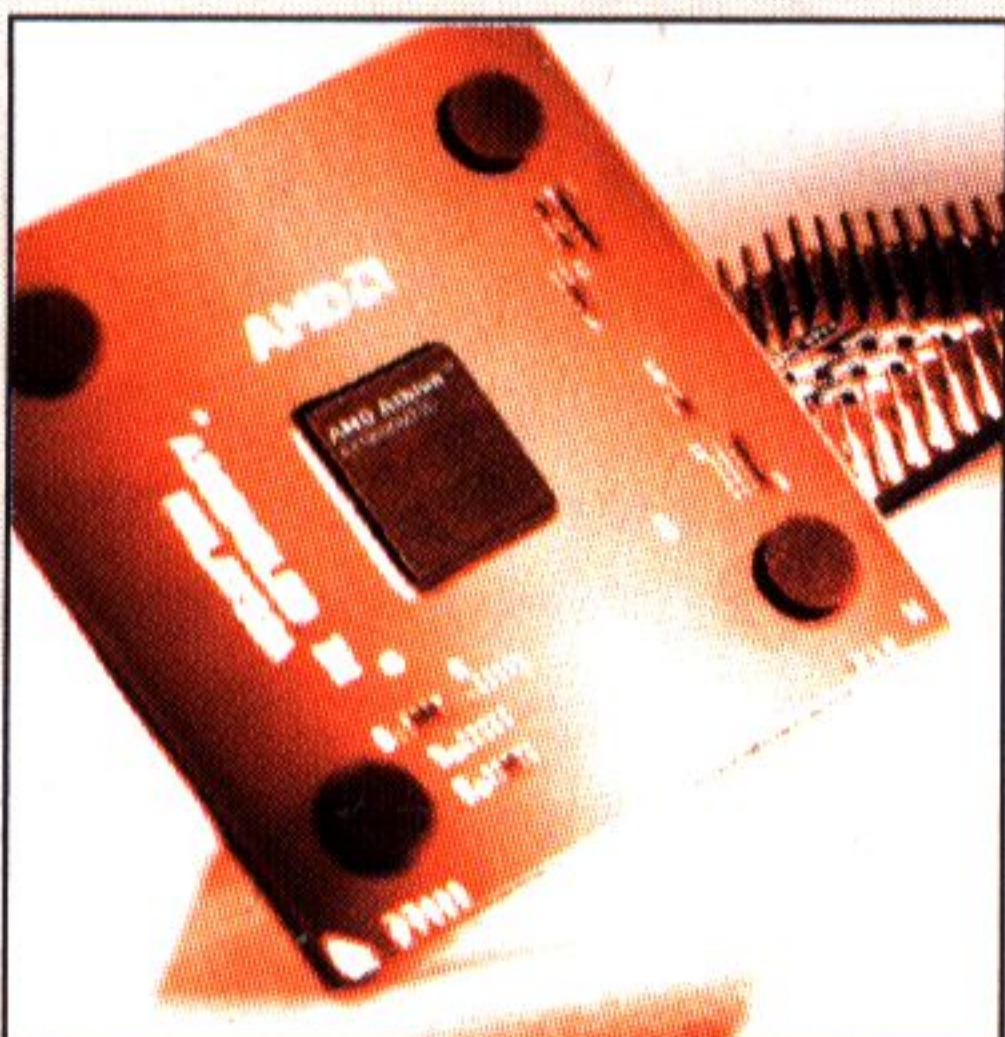


GIGABYTE GA-7VTXH

STREET PRICE £90 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE 01908 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

Usurps another great Gigabyte board – this one is a great Via KT266A-based DDR solution. Integrated on board are both 10/100 LAN and four-channel audio from Creative, and yet it costs less than a ton. In testing it proved stable and among the faster DDR boards for Athlon. A complete bargain.

PROCESSOR



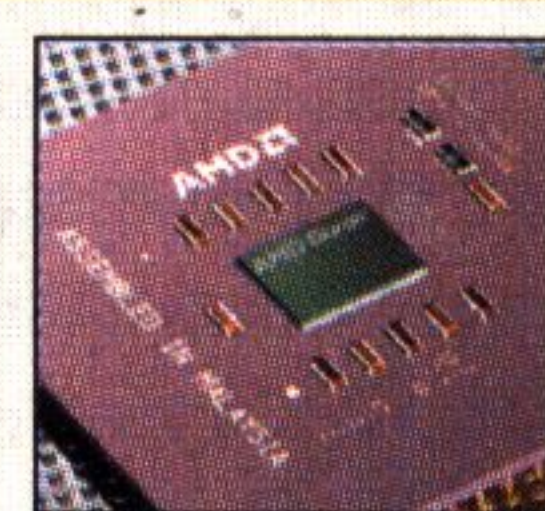
AMD ATHLON XP 1700+

STREET PRICE £105 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A

MANUFACTURER AMD
WEBSITE www.amd.com

The Athlon XP processors are named after the clockspeed of Intel processors it claims to beat. The 1700+ actually runs at a clockspeed of 1.47GHz, and with new so-called QuantiSpeed architecture, more on-chip cache and souped-up 3DNow! instruction set, it offers superb performance in a range of applications – not least games. While the 2000 is currently the fastest processor in the range, the 1700+ is good value for money. Ensure your Socket A motherboard has an updated BIOS and correctly rated components to run an XP processor before you fork out.

WAS
£114
NOW
£105



DURON 1000

STREET PRICE £46
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it a top processor for gamers.

WAS
£49
NOW
£46

HARD DRIVE



SEAGATE BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB

STREET PRICE £95 inc VAT
TELEPHONE 01628 890 366

MANUFACTURER Seagate
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

We have a new Best Buy hard drive – the 60Gb Seagate Barracuda ATA IV. The IBM Deskstar 75GXP drives are looking a bit long in the tooth alongside this modern beastie. Although it's a 7,200 RPM drive, it runs both cooler and quieter than its peers, which can only be a good thing. Fully loaded with a 2Mb cache, the performance is solid across the board, both in terms of average seek times and sustained data throughput. We recommend the 60Gb drive on the basis that it seems pretty good value for money, though the range also offers 20, 40 and 80Gb variants.

WAS
£95
NOW
£98



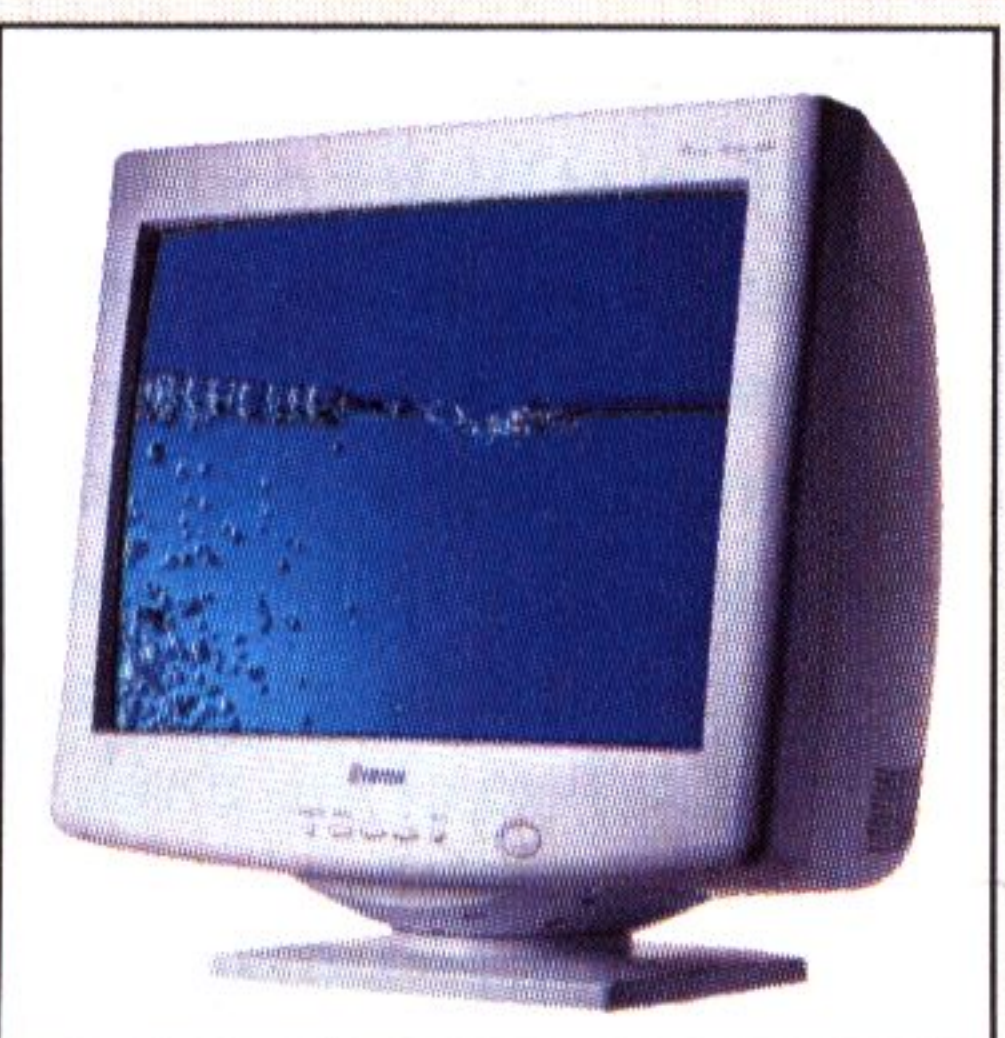
SEAGATE U SERIES 6 40GB

STREET PRICE £66 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, but is replaced in the Buyer's Guide by its own replacement. The U Series 6 drive has much the same spec as the Series 5, but runs quieter and cooler. We've also uprated capacity to 40Gb – great value.

WAS
£70
NOW
£66

MONITOR

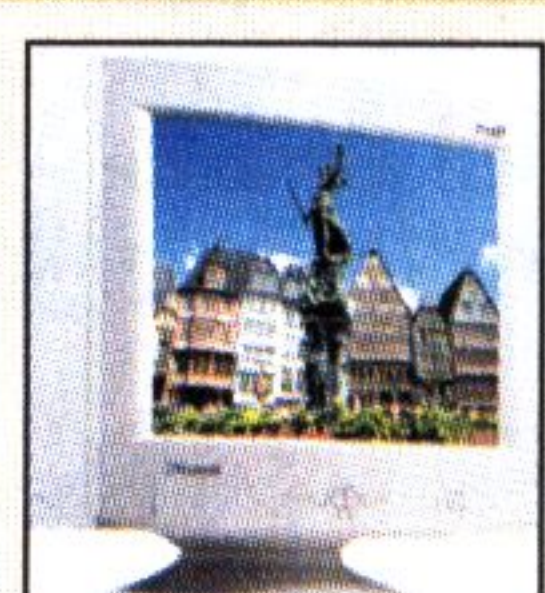


IYYAMA VM PRO 512 22IN

STREET PRICE £633
TELEPHONE 01438 745482

MANUFACTURER iiyama
WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Our long-standing Best Buy monitor, the VM Pro 510, is superseded by the 512. Equipped with the latest Mitsubishi aperture grille Diamondtron screen, it has a rather smaller viewable area than suggested, closer to 20 inches than 22, but gives outstanding results at resolutions up to 2048x1536 at 85Hz – something many graphics cards can't even support. If your video card has the bandwidth, you can rely on this monitor to give you pin-sharp results at 1600x1200. There's also the useful inclusion of a four-port USB hub as well as a pair of speakers – even if they do sound a bit tinny.



HANSOL 710P 17IN

STREET PRICE £135 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer, Hansol is a company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it will handle 1024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600x1200 at a creditable 75Hz. There's not a lot that'll touch this for the money.

WAS
£151
NOW
£135

GRAPHICS CARD



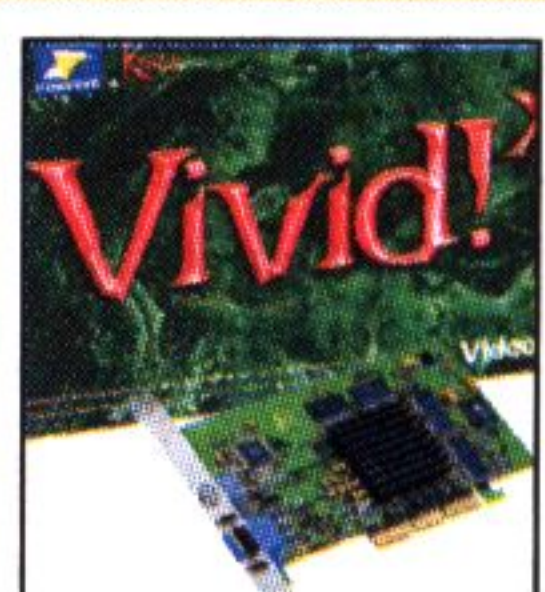
VISIONTEK XSTASY GEFORCE 4 TI4600

STREET PRICE £323 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A

MANUFACTURER VisionTek
WEBSITE www.visiontek.com/uk

We've just had the first batch of GeForce 4 cards cross the PC ZONE bench, and we have a new high-end winner – though it's gonna cost you an arm and a leg for the time being. Move over GeForce 3 Ti500 – here comes the GeForce 4 Titanium 4600, supplied by VisionTek. The clever memory architecture of the GeForce 4 Titanium processor, coupled with 650MHz DDR memory, gives this card bandwidth fearsome enough to cope with FSAA, as well as high resolutions – at blistering frame-rates. It's faster than Radeon, faster than GeForce 3. It even blows Xbox out of the water. Price shown is a conversion of the Euro RRP; no street price is available yet.

WAS
£362
NOW
£323



VIDEOLOGIC VIVID!XS 32MB

STREET PRICE £71 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

The new Kyro II chipset blows its slower Kyro brethren to smithereens at 175MHz clock speed. The 32Mb Vivid!XS replaces the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 as Best Budget Buy – but only just, there's barely anything to choose between the two.

◀ BEST BUDGET



HERCULES GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II

STREET PRICE £36 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

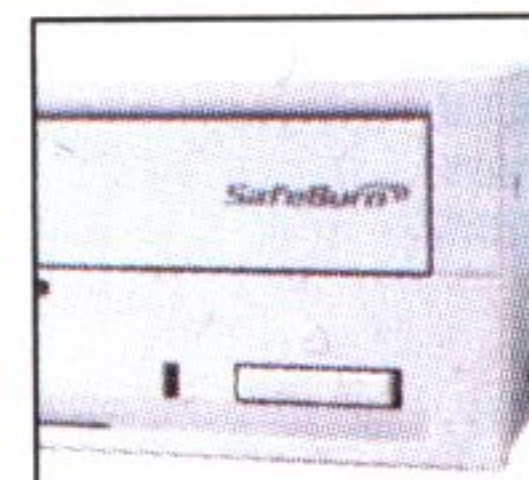
This four-channel audio card represents excellent value for money and its DirectSound 3D support is gib-tastic. You can even get four channels of surround sound from your DVD movies with a special version of PowerDVD!



MICROSOFT GAMEVOICE USB

STREET PRICE £49.99 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

So how can a set of budget headphones cost more than our Best Buy? It's simple really – the GameVoice enables you to talk to your mates over the Internet. It works very well, and as they double as a more than decent set of headphones, they're a bit of a bargain.



YAMAHA CRW3200E-VK

STREET PRICE £112
MANUFACTURER Yamaha
TELEPHONE N/A **WEBSITE:** www.yamaha-it.de

Yamaha make great CD-RW drives, and the 3200 is the company's current range topper – despite its keen price. We love its AudioMaster burning mode for high-quality audio CD burning, but it also shares most of the features of the Plextor, but at a lower price. It's not that much slower either – a veritable bargain.



SAITEK CYBORG 3D GOLD

STREET PRICE £30
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com

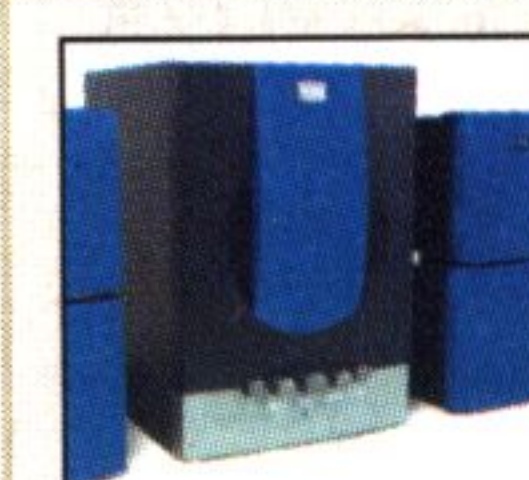
Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and adjustable – even lefties are catered for – and its response and accuracy are unequalled.



SIDEWINDER PLUG 'N' PLAY

STREET PRICE £12
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

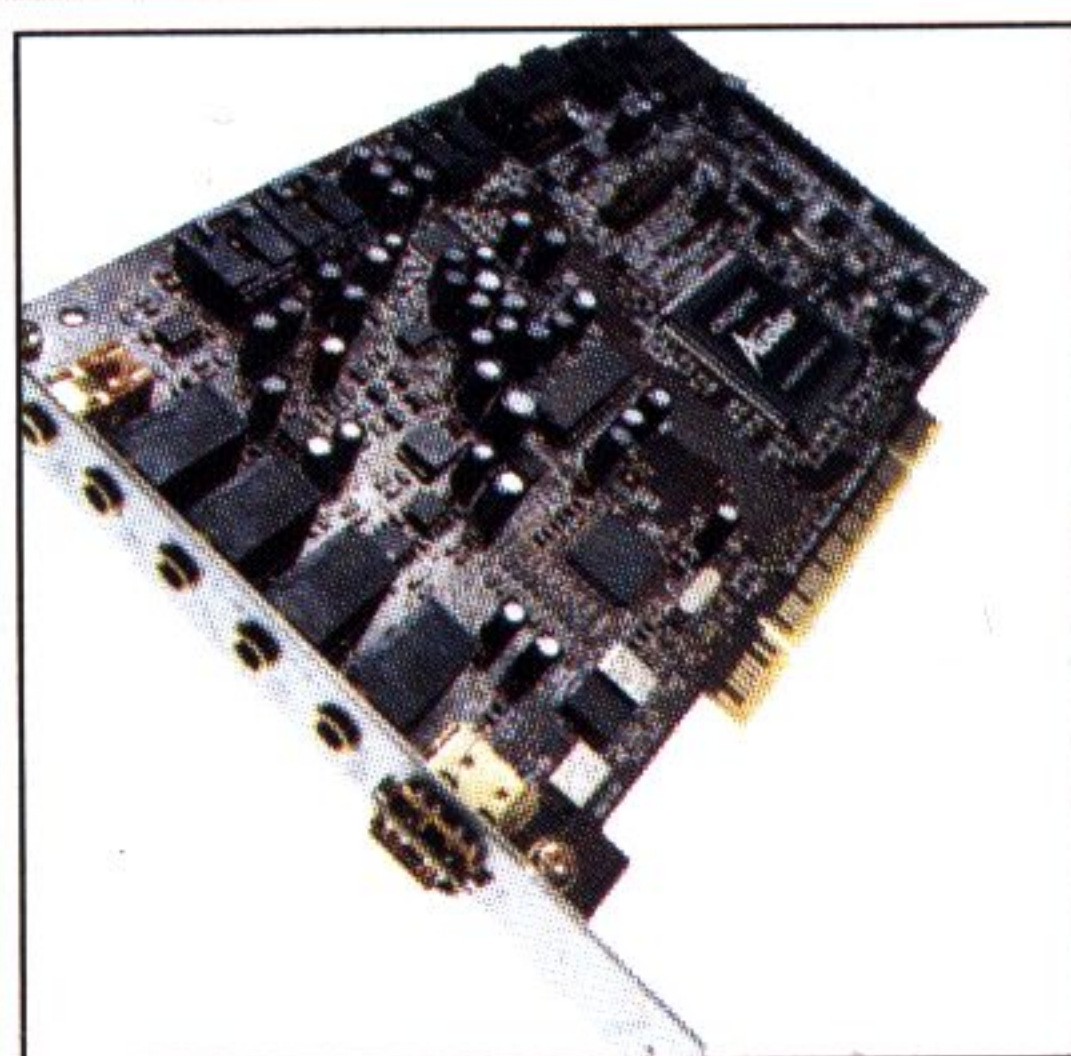
Four buttons, two triggers, directional pad, USB. Dead simple, dead effective and really rather cheap. The Plug 'n' Play Gamepad is the new basic controller from the Seattle Sidewinders and comes in funky transparent plastic, in contrast to the gloomy black pads of yesteryear.



HERCULES XPS210

STREET PRICE £40 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This small but perfectly formed 2.1 speaker set is cheap – but doesn't sound it. With tone controls and stereo enhancement, it's an ideal solution for desktop gaming. The satellites and subwoofer are well matched, giving a decent overall sound. And adorned in royal blue, it looks the part too...



CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY PLAYER

STREET PRICE £79 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
WEBSITE www.europe.creative.com

The SonicFury gets pipped to the post by the excellent new Audigy Player from Creative Labs. Successor to the very successful Sound Blaster Live! series, the Audigy has an audio engine four times as powerful, excellent audio quality, and a range of features that makes it the most versatile all-round gaming/music/DVD soundcard. EAX Advanced HD adds a range of new 3D audio features, though it'll be a while before games filter through with support for the more esoteric options. It's about £20 more expensive than its main competition, but we reckon it's well worth it.



SENNHEISER HD 200 MASTER

STREET PRICE £45
TELEPHONE 01494 551 551

MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
WEBSITE www.sennheiser.co.uk

This German audio company has been around for more than 50 years, founded by the suitably Teutonic-sounding Dr Fritz Sennheiser. The HD200s are actually targeted at DJs, and for good reason. They're very, very loud. They're very, very strong. They have a closed back design, meaning you can hear nearby rocket jumpers comfortably while her indoors has *EastEnders* turned up high enough so she can hear it from the kitchen. And, crucially for extended gaming sessions, they're comfortable and light, weighing around 140g. A great pair of cans at a top price – what you waiting for?

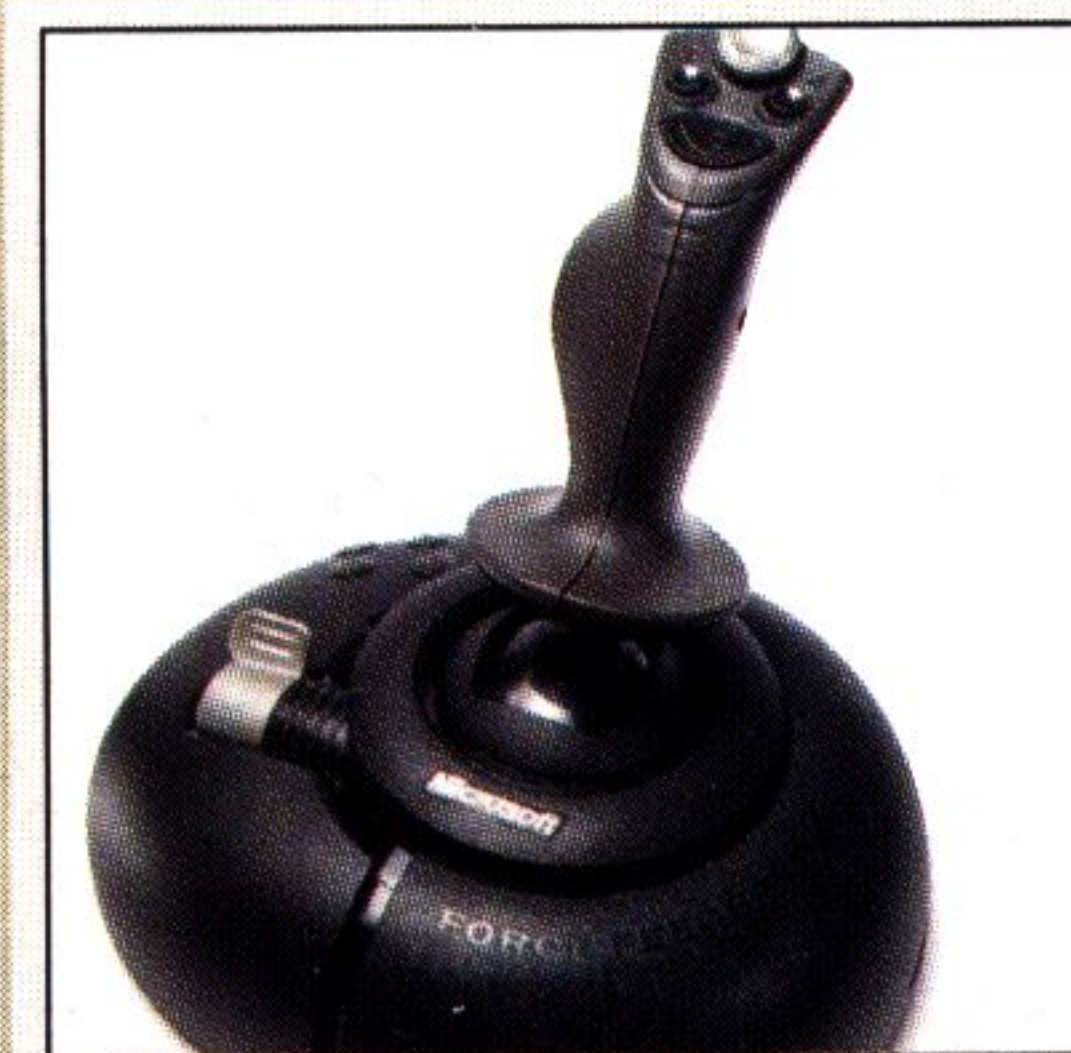


PLEXTOR PX-W4012TA

STREET PRICE £138
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522

MANUFACTURER Plextor
WEBSITE www.plextor.com

Plextor once again take top honours with a superfast 40x Write, 12x ReWrite and 40x Read drive. No matter what task you throw at it, it simply zips along, and BURN-Proof technology stops buffer underruns (where the data flow from the burner's cache to the burner is interrupted) from rendering the drive a coffee placemat machine. Particularly nifty is its PowerRec II technology which analyses the quality of the blank media being used and adjusts the write speed downwards if necessary. All in all, we reckon this is the best drive out there – and it's shipped with Nero 5, another major bonus.



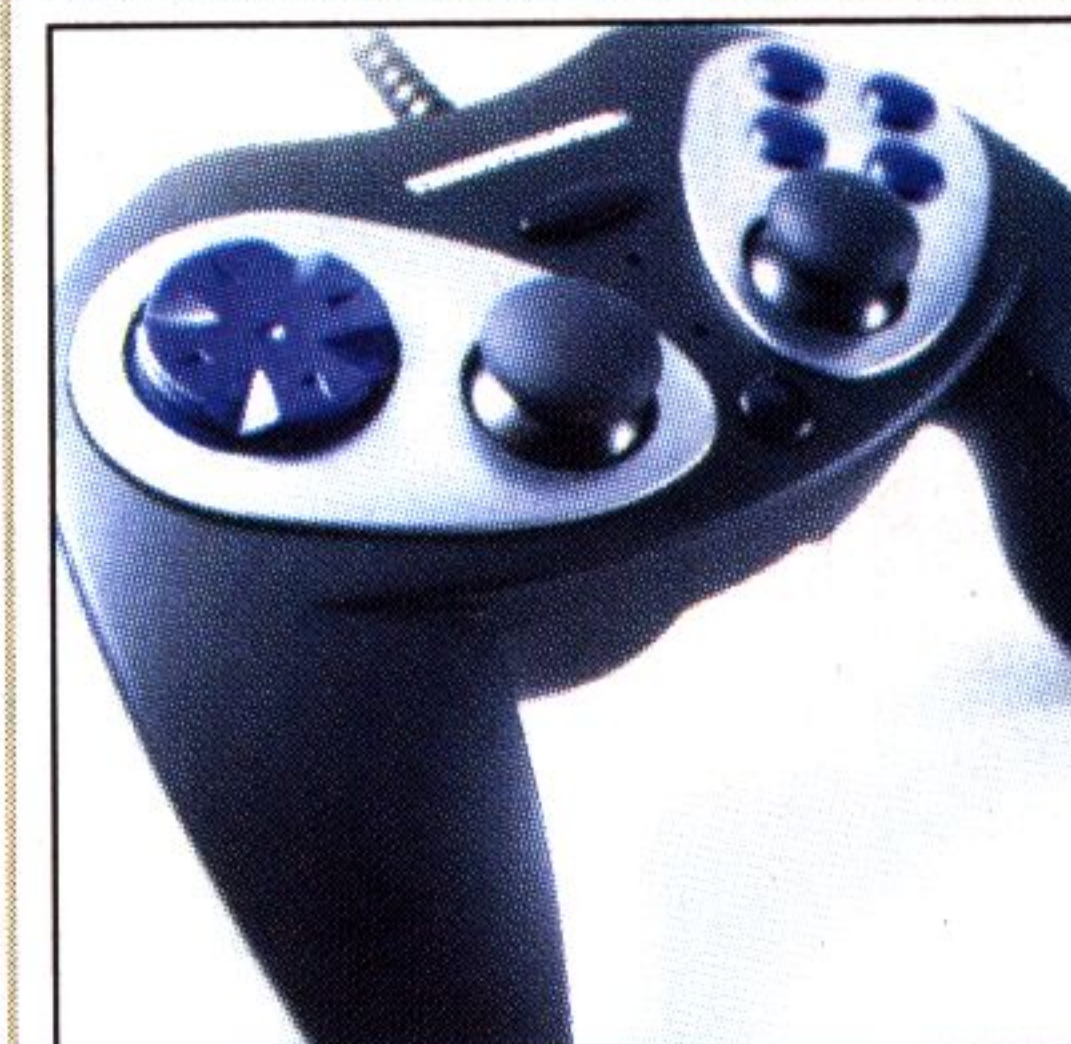
MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCEFEEDBACK 2

STREET PRICE £62 inc VAT
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100

MANUFACTURER Microsoft

WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/sidewinder/sidewinder.htm

Force-feedback products aren't everyone's cup of tea, but nothing comes close to the SideWinder FF2. It's a huge, heavy tabletop affair, with the power transformer built into the base. An infrared sensor causes the stick to leap to attention when you grasp it, which might be a bit startling, but is still rather good. The force-feedback routines work extremely well – mainly because the motors are so powerful. If more games made better use of the technology, it would be a must-have piece of gear.



THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM DUAL-POWER GAMEPAD

STREET PRICE £26
TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600

MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

We may not be that fond of Thrustmaster's joysticks, but this force feedback joypad and its non-force feedback cousin, the Firestorm Dual Analogue, are superbly designed. The Firestorm Dual Power sports no fewer than 13 control buttons, not to mention the twin analogue directional hats. As a result, it's one of the most versatile controllers on the market, equally at home with arcade-style games that need digital pads or flight sims requiring more progressive analogue control. Also included is Thrustmapper software that allows you to customise its behaviour in any game. Delicious, especially at this price.



KLIPSCH PROMEDIA 4.1

STREET PRICE £299
MANUFACTURER Klipsch
TELEPHONE 0031 314 383 699

WEBSITE www.klipsch.com

Take your pick for Best Buy between the stunning Klipsch 4.1 THX-approved speakers and the cheaper long-term favourites Sirocco Crossfire from Videologic. Both represent great value for money, but the Klipsch edges it in the listenability stakes, hence their new entry here. They're beautifully made, sound amazing and are the first speakers that can split your ears just as well as the Crossfires. You'll find no better speaker set-up for watching DVDs and playing games on PC.

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ZONE TOP 10

Playable demos of the top 10 games, according to the PC Zone TOP 100

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- Operation Flashpoint
- Deus Ex
- Severance: Blade of Darkness
- Colin McRae Rally 2.0
- Half-Life: Uplink
- Z: Steel Soldiers
- Zeus: Master of Olympus
- Battle of Britain
- Terminus

EXTENDED PLAY EXTRA

Over 6 months' worth of Extended Play patches and add-ons, so you can get more from your favourites. Featuring extras for **Black & White**, **Unreal Tournament**, **The Sims** and many, many more. PLUS the top 5 Modwatch files over the past year, including **Wanted! The Half-Life Western Pack** – YEEEEEEEE-HAW!

All gifts subject to availability. Allow 28 days for delivery. Please note that Windows 95 is required for most programs on the FREE CD-ROMs and that most of them have limited functionality.



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Finishing a game is only the beginning in Extended Play. Maps, mods, add-ons and extras are all here to help you make the most of your gaming life

BALL BOYS



■ **SILKY SMOOTH** Rhianna Pratchett

▲ There are certain things you shouldn't see at work. Your colleagues' legs being one of them. But although I'm not a football fan, I'm writing this column while recovering from the shock of seeing the team's pins on display at the ZONE five-a-side football tournament last week. Why did I put myself through it? Given the choice of staying at work on my own, or watching my workmates shut in a metal cage trying to force a ball into a goal while simultaneously beating the crap out of each other, it was a no-brainer. It did provide one insight though – I had them down as a hairy-legged bunch but they are actually surprisingly smooth. As smooth, in fact, as this month's Extended Play (that's a terrible link, I know).

For starters, Phil Wand concludes his tirade against dirty cheating scoundrels by taking a look at one of the world's more infamous cheat programmes, OGC. Check out The Guide on page 122 where he tests it out against some of the best cheat-busting software out there. If you're just looking for extra stuff to play, check out the Disc Pages on page 126, where you'll find exclusive demos of *The Italian Job*, *Beam Breakers* and *2002 FIFA World Cup*, along with a whole mission from *Freedom Force*. And in Games That Changed The World on page 142, Paul Mallinson looks at *Command & Conquer* – the game that took the RTS genre and used it to create one of the most successful franchises ever.

Everybody was kung fu fighting

ON THE
CD
DVD

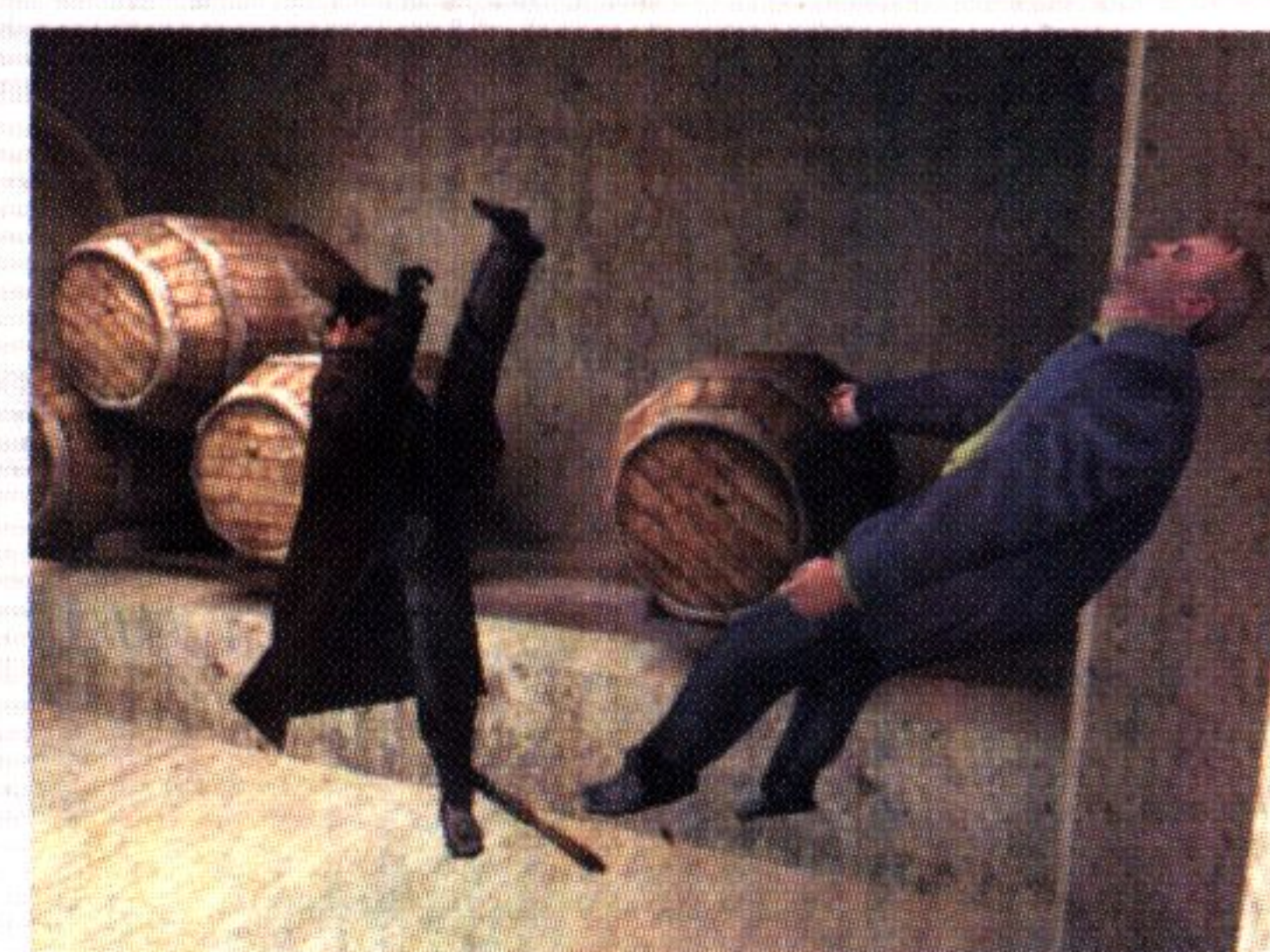
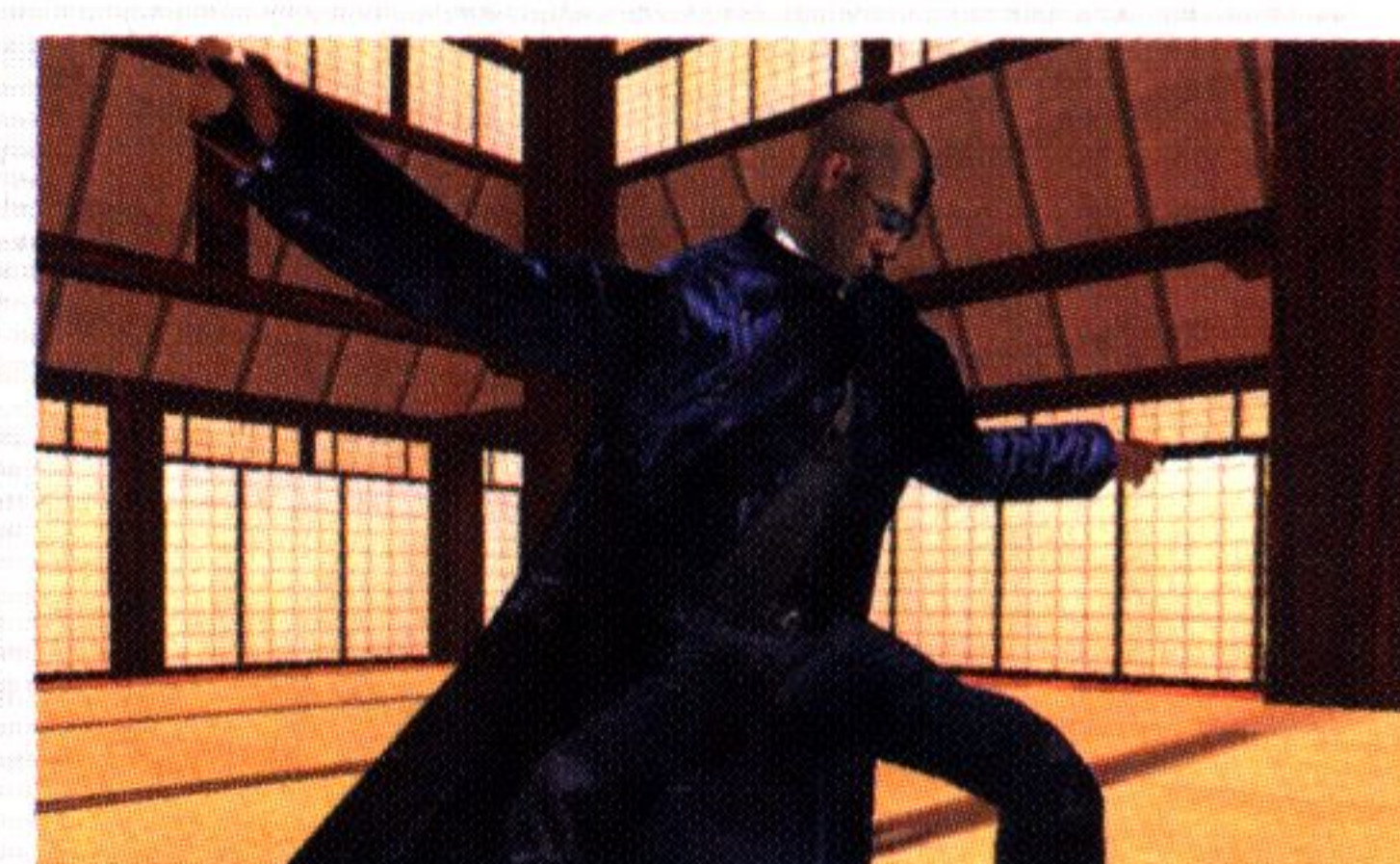
And if you get these mods you'll be as fast as lightning...

■ <http://www.kungfu.maxpayneheadquarters.com/>

■ <http://www.dodgethis.maxpayneheadquarters.com/>



Backflipping off walls takes a bit of practice.



SELDOM DO YOU see Max Payne pictured without a couple of smoking barrels in his hands. Until now. Put your guns down and check out the *Max Payne Kung Fu Edition* mod, where Max has been given a full martial arts makeover. Also on this month's disc is *Dodge This*, a *Matrix*-style full conversion.

The *Kung Fu Edition*, developed by Kenneth Yeung (an avid kung fu student himself) introduces a visually impressive

kung fu fighting mode that gives Max a whole host of new punches, combos and spinning/flying kicks. It also introduces twirls and flips in place of the standard dodge moves. But perhaps one of the most innovative features (which Yeung implemented into the latest build after listening to fans' suggestions) is the ability to get Max to run along and backflip off walls, cars and even other characters, which you can see demonstrated in the above screenshot. Features like kung fu stick-fighting have yet to be included, but the mod has been received warmly by the *Max Payne* community. Try it for yourself on this month's CD/DVD.

Taking a bigger bite out of the fortune cookie is the team behind the *Dodge This*

conversion. The team behind it claim it's based on the 'world' of *The Matrix* – rather than being a direct rip-off. We only hope the guys at Warner Bros understand. The conversion features famous scenes from the film, a new storyline and an estimated 10-15 *Matrix*-inspired levels such as the Government lobby, the Nebuchadnezzar and the dojo. Bookmark the *Dodge This* website for regular updates on weapons, character skins and level progression.

Both mods look like being great enhancements for the already slick and graphically tasty Mr Payne. But is it really Max who bends, or is it us?

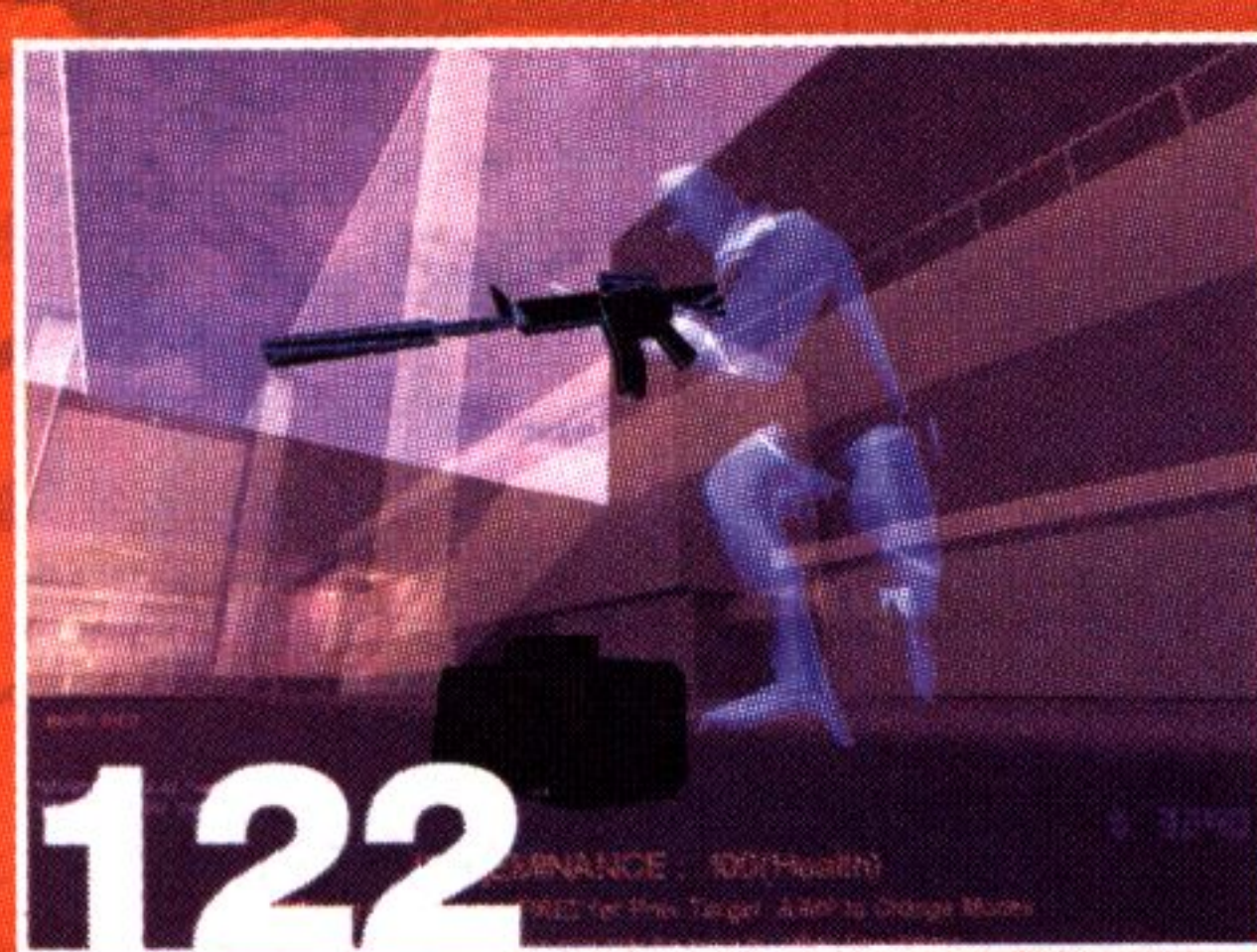


Damn, no parachute.

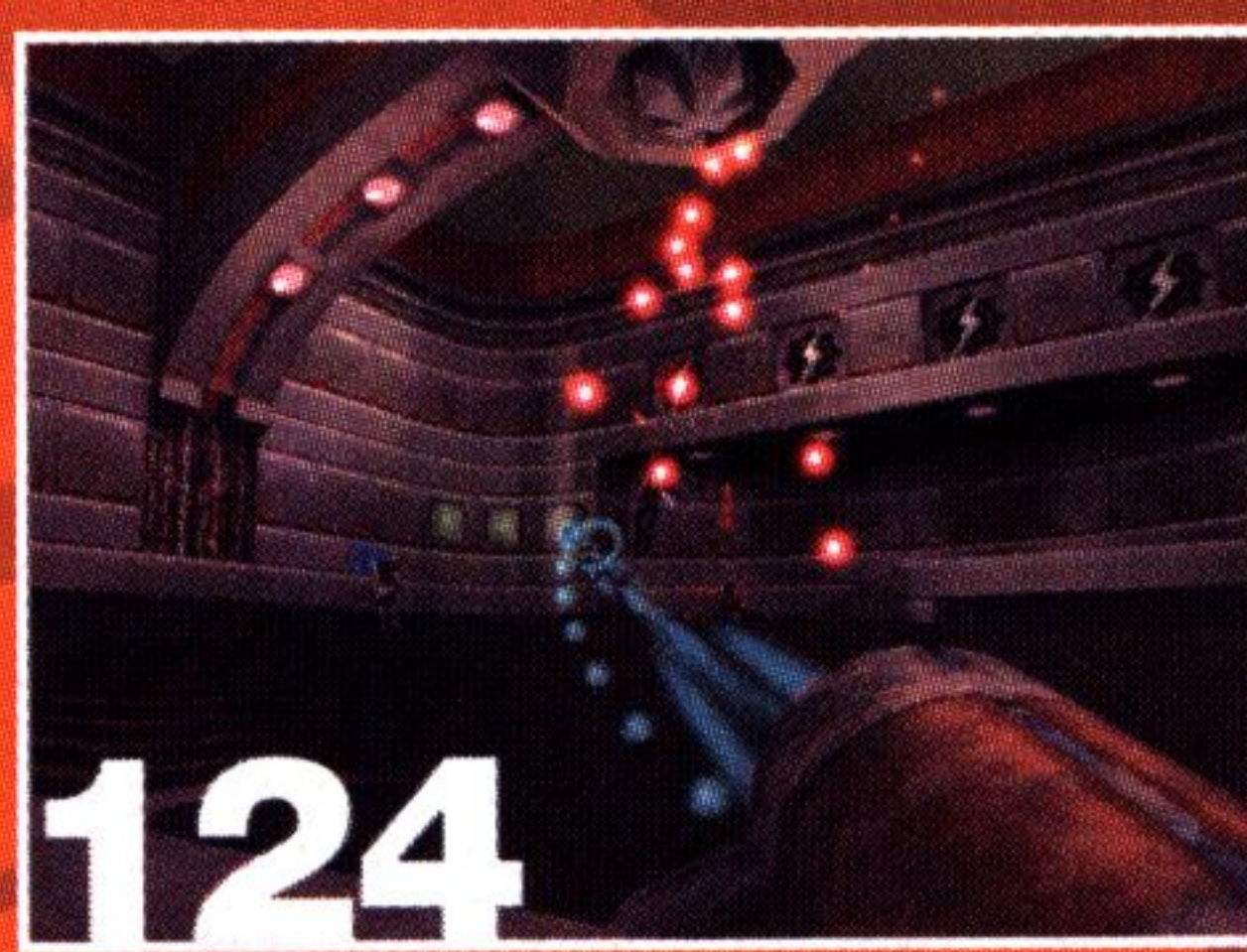
CHEATS AHOY!

When we dropped CheatMaster we had a lot of letters of complaint, but you'll be happy to hear that we've now incorporated a cut-down version of CheatStation onto your cover disc. Just click on CheatStation in Extended Play for this month's goodies, including cheats for *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast*, *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*

(which comes with a full walkthrough), *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, *Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds*, *Commandos 2*, *Red Faction*, *Ghost Recon*, *Empire Earth*, *Alien Vs Predator* and *Zoo Tycoon*. If this doesn't quell the fire you can get over 40,000 cheats online at www.pczone.co.uk.



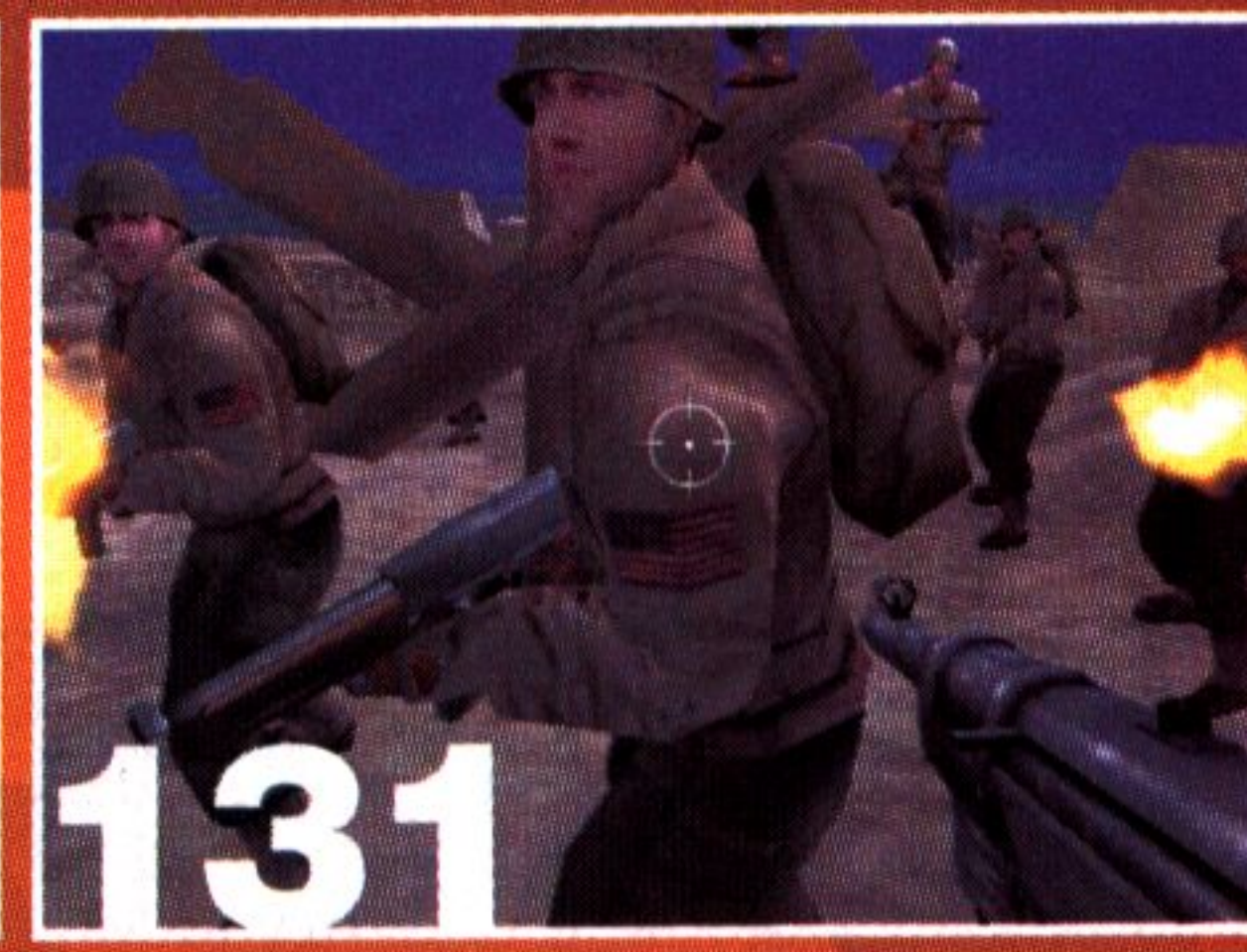
THE GUIDE
How to spot a cheat



THE MODSQUAD
Parkas at the ready...



DISC PAGES
Play the latest demos



FIGHT CLUB
Come and 'ave a go...

The Tower Of Iron Will

From the makers of *The Darkest Day* comes a massive new mod for *Baldur's Gate II*

■ <http://www.toiw.shadow-network.net/Index.htm>

MODDING FOR a game as large and complex as *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn* is going to take up a serious amount of your beer-drinking time, so you'd think that Richard Haines must be a model of sobriety at the moment. This latest undertaking from the co-creator of *The Darkest Day* mod (reviewed issue 110) and his team, goes by the name *The Tower Of Iron Will*.

The Darkest Day was well received here at ZONE and also in the wider *Baldur's Gate* community, but Haines claims that *TTOIW* will be in a totally different class. "It will look better, play better and have much more interaction and well-balanced kits," he says. It's estimated that the mod will provide 60-100 hours of gameplay – twice as long as *TDD*. Fans of the *Forgotten Realms* novels will also be interested to know that the team have also taken their plot influences from Robert Salvatore's *The Crystal Shard*.



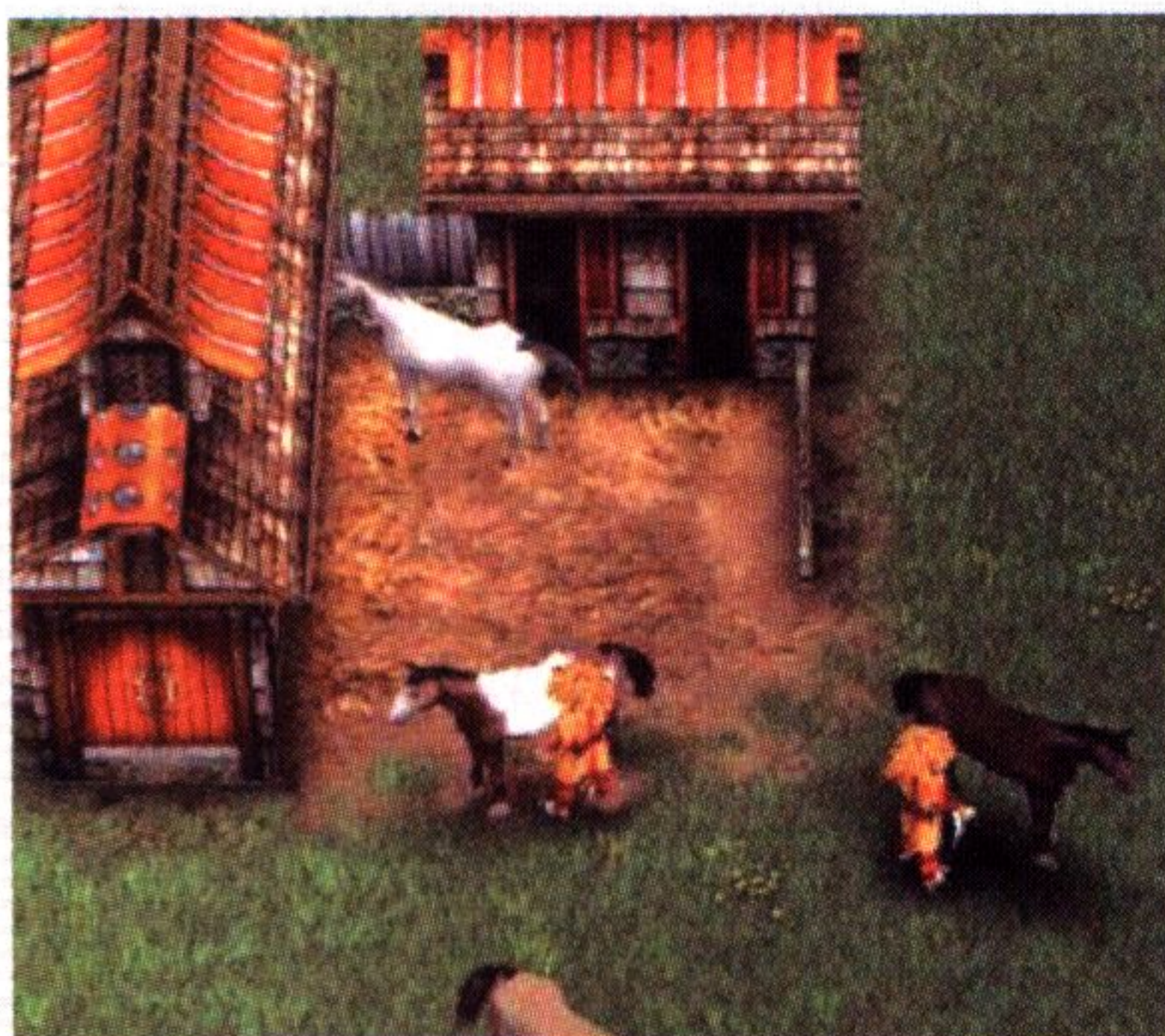
The day was dark, but the light is coming with *The Tower Of Iron Will*.

Battle Realms

■ <http://battlerealm.ubi.com/>

ON THE CD/DVD **BATTLE REALMS** did surprisingly well in our RTS Supertest this month, beating off stiff competition from both *Z: Steel Soldiers* and *Cossacks*. If this has got you yearning to send a few willing warriors to their glorious deaths, then check out *Battle Realms Battle Pack 2* on the CD/DVD.

The pack will update your game from *Battle Pack 1* and contains lots of useful gameplay adjustments including short cut commands, bug fixing and a number of tweaks to unit damage. The pack also contains the world map editor and three new multiplayer missions: Four Gods' Garden (eight-player), Rooks Desolation (seven-player) and Vetkin's Redoubt (three-player).



Don't start a new *Battle Realms* game without *Battle Pack 2*.

Tribes 2

■ <http://www.planettribes.com>

ON THE CD/DVD **VALVE'S** Worldcraft Editor has provided the modding community with the opportunity to create great add-ons for *Half-Life*, *SWAT 3* and *Tribes*. The latest Worldcraft upgrade for *Tribes 2* contains OpenGL 3D, which is much faster and meatier than previous rendering tools. It also has texture locking and an easy-to-use 3D grid.

If you're not familiar with Worldcraft the file on our CD/DVD also contains a detailed read me, which explains stage by stage how to use the editor. You'll find everything you need to know in there, from the basics of creating missions and using the terraformer and terrain editors, to adding the finishing touches to your map – such as observer points and spawn spheres.



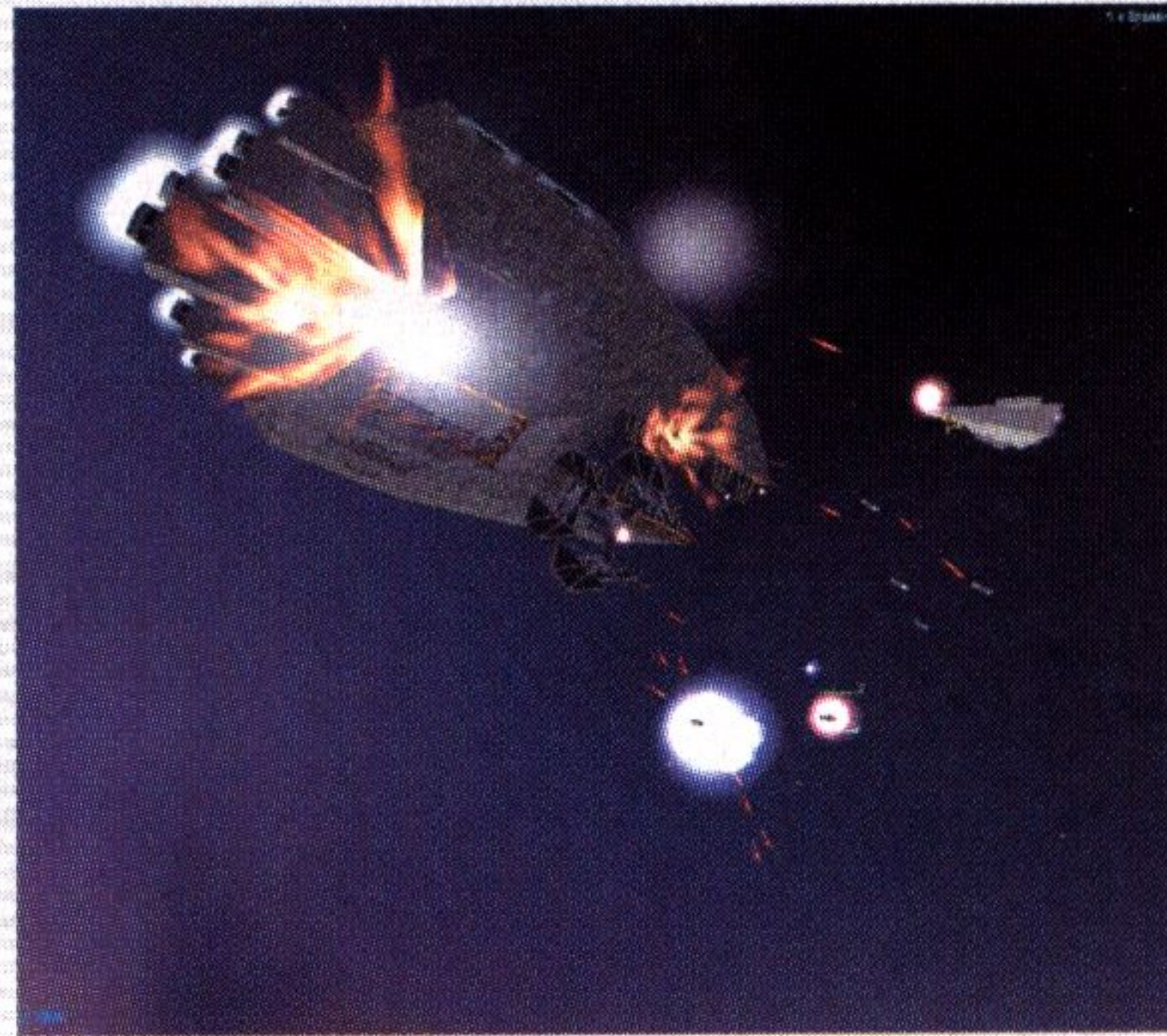
Create your own *Tribes 2* mission courtesy of the Worldcraft Editor.

Homeworld

■ <http://www.tgu.org.uk/users/>

NOW RICHIE has acquired the powers of a Jedi Master he is truly in tune with all things to do with the Force. And sure enough a little tingle just above his right ear told him that the latest update for *Star Wars: New Rebellion* (the total conversion mod for *Homeworld*) has now become available.

New Rebellion sets out to bring the vast space battles of the Galactic Civil War into the 3D real-time strategy setting of *Homeworld*, allowing you act out all of those childhood (and very probably adult) *Star Wars* fantasies by commanding vast fleets of Galactic Empire or Rebellion ships. This latest patch also fixes a few bugs and updates several of the gameplay features, which is good.



Command your own fleet of TIE Fighters.

SHORTS

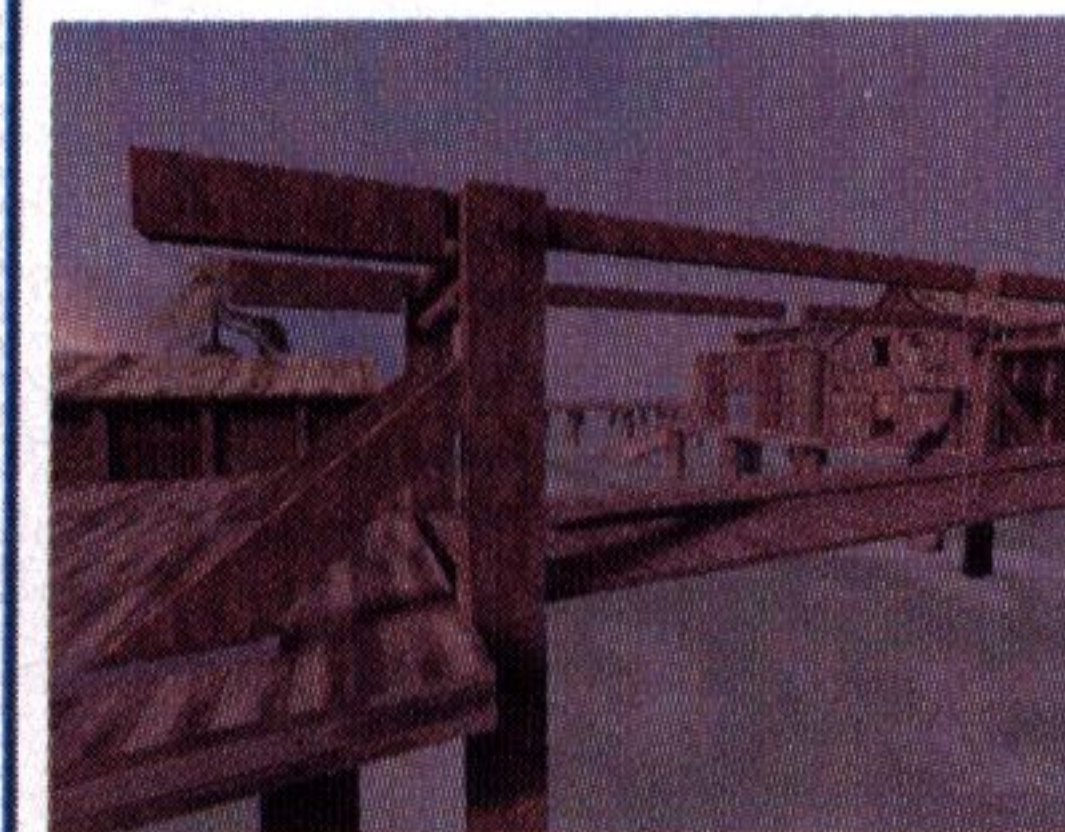
SEEING RED



www.planetmedalofhonor.com/redorchestra

This *Medal Of Honor* mod is based around the Red Orchestra spy network, which played a vital part in the destruction of the Nazis in WWII. Watch these pages for updates.

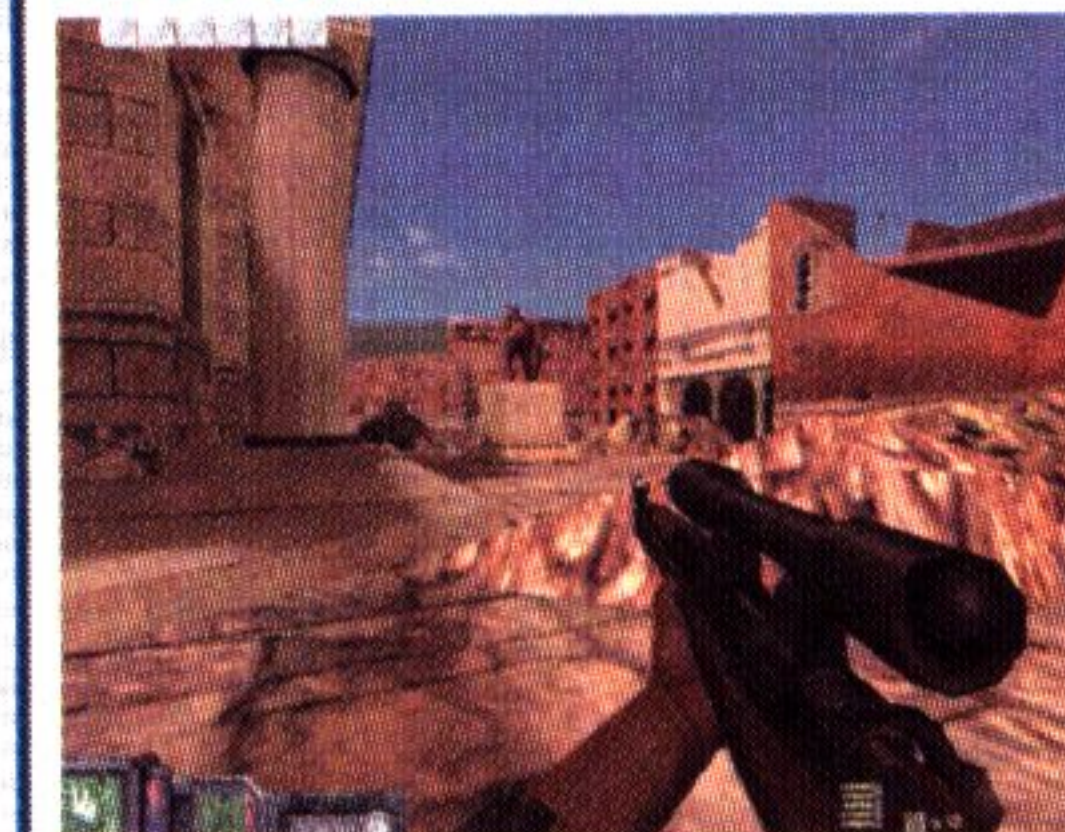
THE DARK IS RISING



<http://jtd.fragland.net/eng/popup.htm>

Journey Into The Dark is a multiplayer story-based mod for *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. The German-based team behind it is hoping to create a more RPG style with individual character classes, quests and new weapons such as maces, bows and axes.

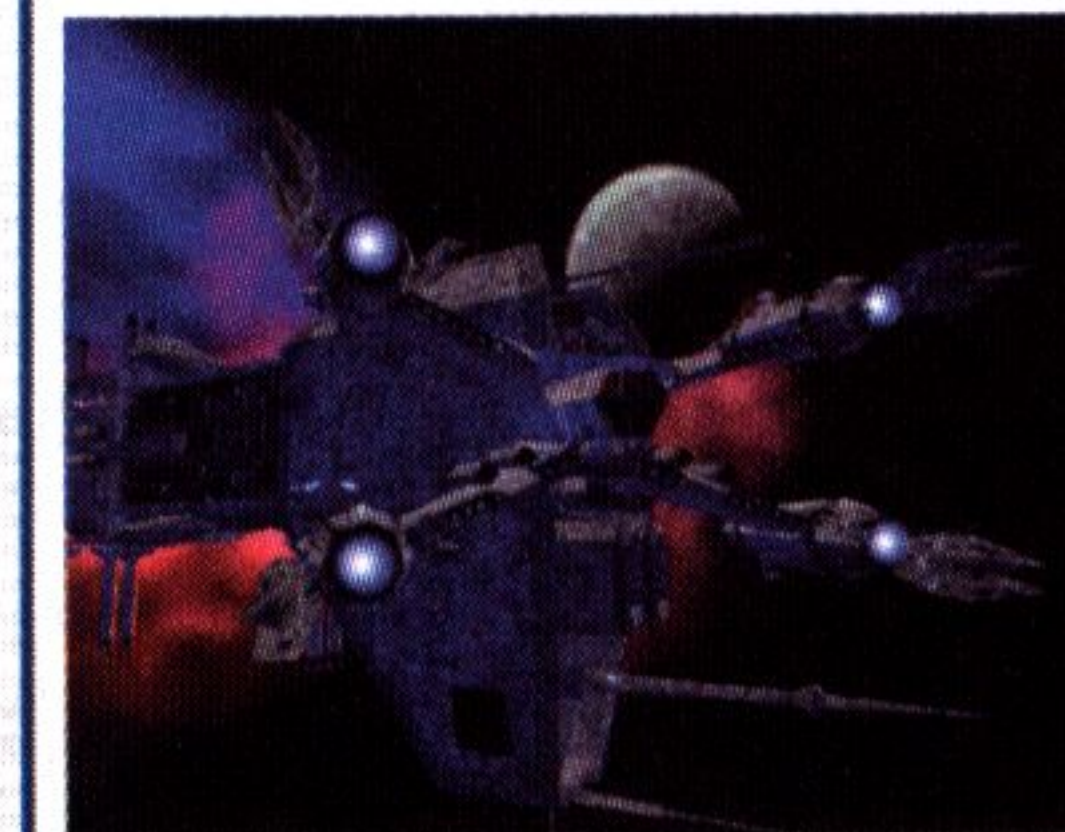
STURMING IN



www.sturmbot.friendsofp.net

If you can't get online but fancy some *Day Of Defeat* fun, then populate your game courtesy of the Sturm Bot, an AI enemy that now supports *DoD* beta 2. It's all good practice.

BABYLON ZOOM



<http://freespace.volitionwatch.com/babylon/>

Check out the above URL which is home to the *Babylon Project*, where everything to do with Babylonian combat is brought to the world of *Freespace 2*. The team is currently working on release 2 of the mod, and you can find regular updates on the website.

RETURN OF THE PUNK ASS BITCHES: PART 2 – COMBATING THE CHEATS

What has the world come to? **Phil Wand** spends an evening with one of the world's most prolific cheats, OGC, and wonders if online gaming can ever be safe from hackers

IT'S HALF PAST

seven, I'm all set for a game, and the latest, most dangerous version of OGC is on my hard drive. Running it is as simple as

within an inch of invulnerability, and yet it works right out of the box. Left on default settings, it was more than enough to propel me to the top of any *Counter-*

fire the instant a target is acquired. It adds a boggling array of graphical tricks, such as a rear view mirror, enemy player radar, spiked models, wire-frame maps (this turns the lavish *Counter-Strike* maps into vector-based skeletons), wallhack and more. It also automatically adjusts the firing rate of recoiling weapons such as the AK-47 to keep them accurate no matter how trigger happy the user. The most terrifying thing of all is that the cheats all worked for us, and worked transparently. OGC will compensate on servers that watch for aimbots (some servers feature modifications that try and gauge the speed of players – those with subatomic reaction times are assumed to be cheats) and can be powered down in a second if others cry foul. All you have to do then is step boldly into enemy fire with your guns blazing – other players won't question you if every now and then you're seen to be mortal. It's the oldest trick in the book.

GUARDIAN ANGELS

Recently, though, game fraudsters haven't had such an easy time. Hackers aren't the only people who can code, and some of the more capable gamers have taken to software development to try and put a stop to hacks like OGC ruining the world's most popular online shooters.

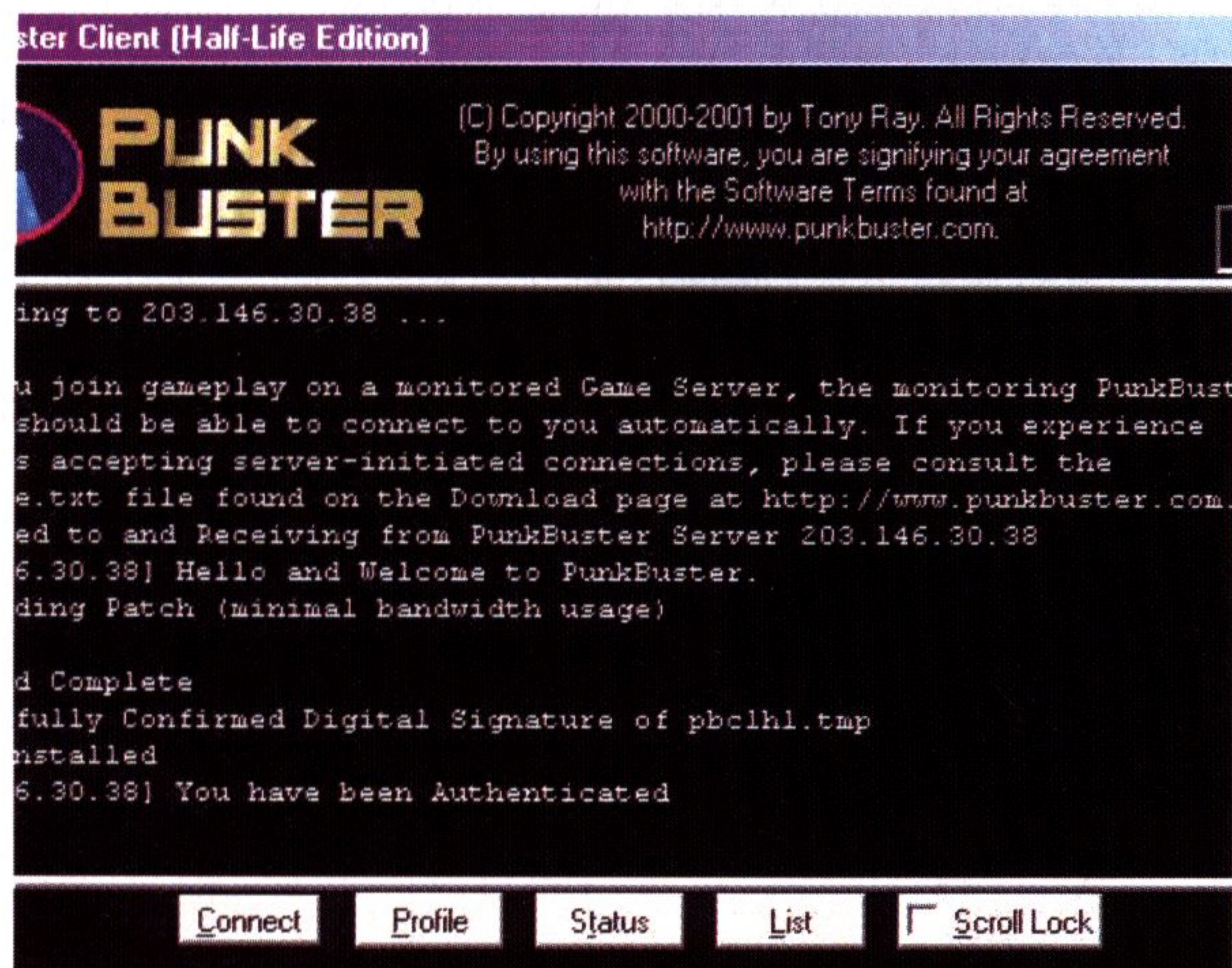
PUNKBUSTER

■ www.evenbalance.com

There was a time when PunkBuster looked as though it

would become the de facto standard for anti-cheat software, but in August of last year the developers stopped work on the product – the version for *Half-Life* is now no longer supported. It's also side-stepped by the releases of OGC and *Half-Life Hack*. The PunkBuster team have a release for *Return To*

and server machines. The client watches not only for known cheat programs but also for ones it doesn't know about – how it does this is kept secret – and then reports what it finds back to the server so that action may be taken. The software can update itself automatically from the web, meaning your machine

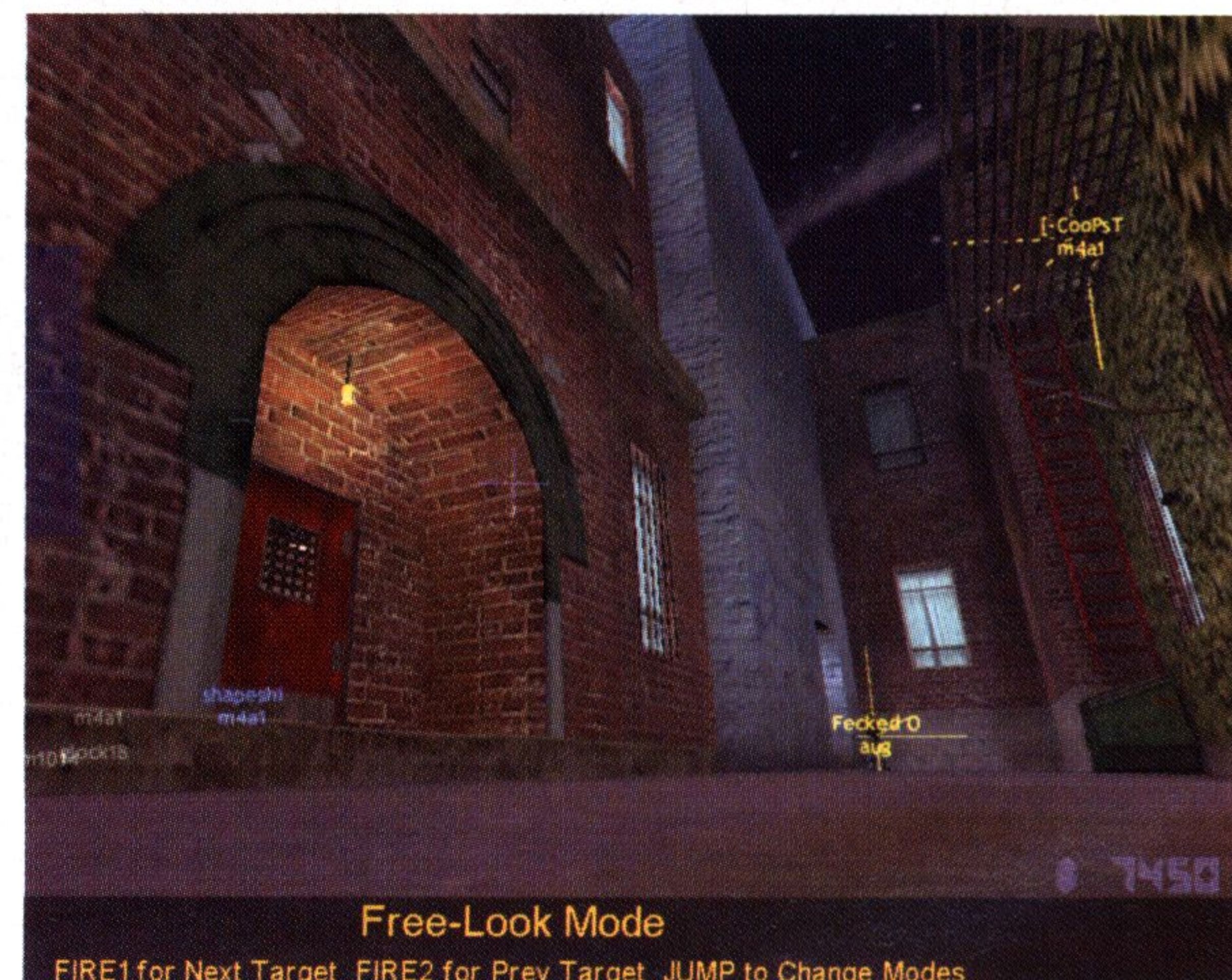


Old stalwart PunkBuster is now useless against the latest cheats.

double-clicking: it asks you for the location of your *Half-Life* executable, and off you go. As predicted by the documentation, it passes undetected by PunkBuster and is invisible to most forms of cheat detection software, including many of the more recent versions of CSGuard. Its feature list is long and intimidating, allowing 'power cheaters' to fiddle and tweak to

Strike or *Team Fortress* scoreboard, and then keep me there for as long as I remained online.

Online Gaming Cheats, or just plain OGC, is the number one problem for anyone playing *Half-Life* derivatives online. It provides a highly configurable aimbot, making crosshairs lock onto enemy players and track them as they move, and it can be set to



A peaceful scene from *cs_backalley*. Unless you were playing dirty, you'd think you were safe.

Castle Wolfenstein waiting in the wings, but since it's a less popular game and relatively unaffected by cheating, we can't see too many people downloading it.

will always be aware of all the very latest hacks. The downside is it won't work with Windows NT 4.0.

CHEATING-DEATH

■ www.cheatingdeath.com

As with the two measures listed above, Cheating-Death is a client/server solution. It works using what it terms as "generic methods" for detecting whether game hacks are installed, and as such does not need to know the specifics of whether a player is using OGC, *Half-Life Hack*, XQZ2, or whatever. Put simply, it has been programmed to be smart enough to recognise when a gamer is playing dirty, and does not need updating when new cheats become available.

CSGUARD

■ www.csguard.com

Currently favoured by all the top *Half-Life* servers across the

THE ADMIN'S TALE

OLIVER MULVEY, HEAD ADMIN, BARRYSWORLD COUNTER-STRIKE LEAGUE

As admin of a league I'm all too aware of the nature of cheats and the pressure on me to catch them. Even where there are no tangible prizes to play for, a clan's reputation can still be harmed by an unexpected defeat. In the past, league admins have been very much on their own when it came to catching cheats. Even if they suspected a player of playing dirty, it was difficult to prove. Recent advances in anti-cheating software have restored our ability to fight the cheats, but the best news of all is that, from more than 360 gamers who've taken part in BWCSL so far, just one has been found to be playing dirty.

I suspect that the problem of *Counter-Strike* cheating is exaggerated on public servers, since they contain more casual players without the inclination to learn the game properly. Many of these people use hacks as a shortcut to high scores, and on a bad day we can catch more than 100 people cheating. Also, the habit of aliasing – skilled players using alternative names – leads to cries of 'CHEAT!' when they encounter an anonymous pro. However, neither of these factors is an issue in league play. Perhaps the serious *Counter-Strike* community isn't so bad after all.



Paladin requires you to download a small client application.

world, including *PC ZONE*, BarrysWorld and Jolt, CSGuard is perhaps the most effective anti-cheat measure available. Unlike PunkBuster, Paladin and Cheating-Death, CSGuard requires no interaction from the player – you don't need to download a special client program to be protected. The server checks your client and your hard drive for cheat programs – it will take action even if they're just sitting on your hard drive – and it's regularly updated.

VALVE SOFTWARE

■ www.valvesoftware.org

There's been a lot of speculation as to what the creators of *Half-Life* will do to combat cheating, as understandably they're being rather cagey as to how it will work. What they have said is that it'll be available real soon, and that cheaters will be banned for up to a week from playing on any server, not just from the machine that caught them. Servers will report back to a central database to keep track of every fraudster, so if you have to use

it can take many games spanning several hours to work out that someone is playing dishonestly. Things to look out for include anticipating the moves of opponents, priming grenades before other players enter view, and killing through walls. A good test for *TFC* players is to concussion or rocket jump directly in front of a suspected player, and see if he manages either to bead you – to paint a sniper dot on your face – or slot you while you're off the ground. While this is perfectly possible, doing it consistently requires a huge amount of skill. You could also try using water for cover, as anyone above has no way of knowing your exact location – if you still get hit, it's quite possible you're being conned.

If you think you've found a cheat, don't go hurling abuse and don't single them out. This is likely to make them either stop what they're doing or leave. No, what you want is an admin to arrive and ban them from the server – this

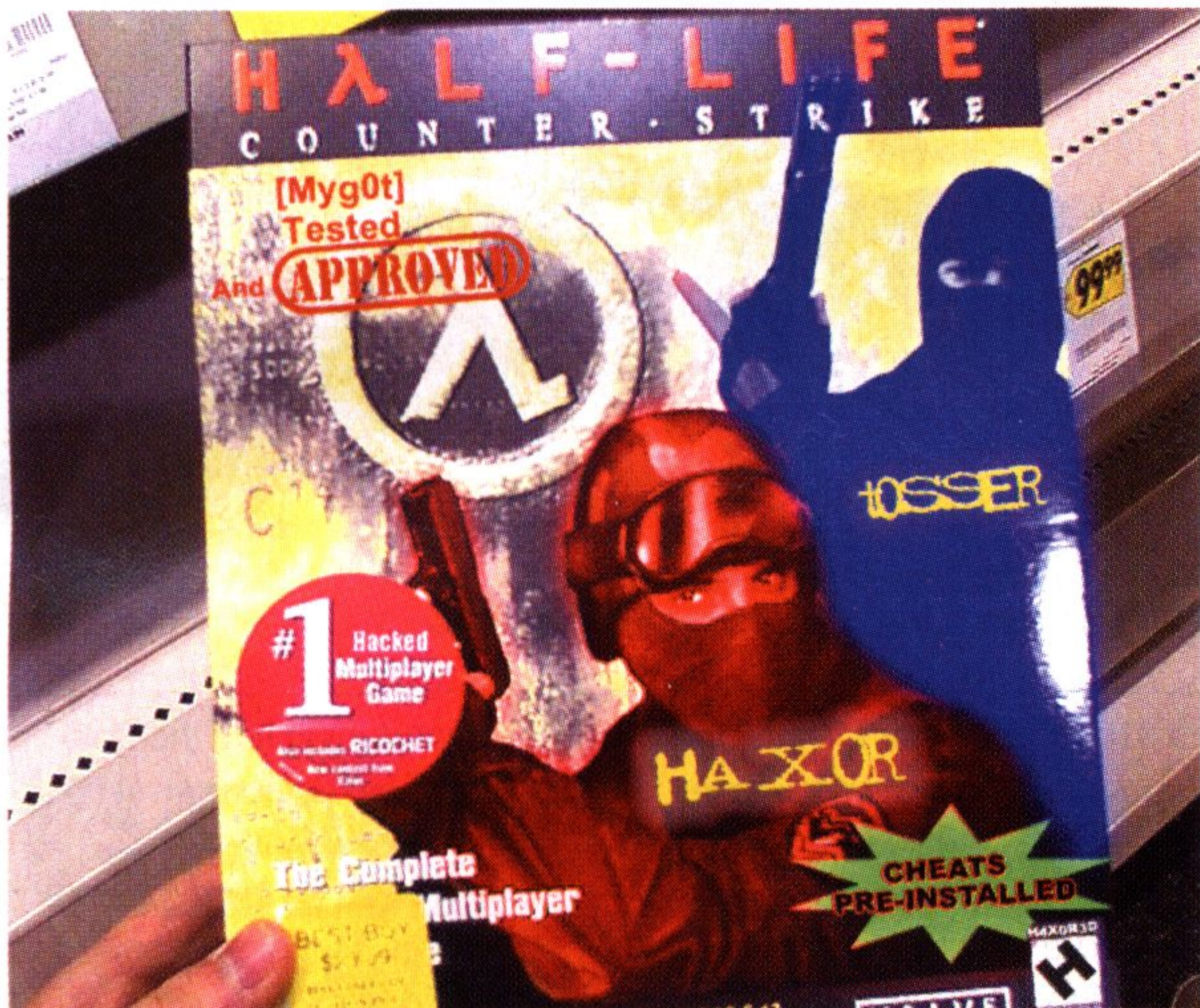


Well, here's one counter-terrorist who ain't cheating. OGC would have warned him of impending doom.

ensures they won't spoil games for others in the future. Most popular servers run IRC channels where players can ask for help from admins, and *PC ZONE* is no different. As long as you have an IRC client, such as mIRC from www.mirc.co.uk or even Trillian from www.trillian.cc, you can join

room #pcz and ask for help. Most of our admins lurk in that room and will be glad to help you out. **PCZ**

We would like to thank the *PCZ* admin team, plus the Demon and BarrysWorld admins for their assistance in compiling this article.



Infamous 'cheat clans' such as myg0t go out of their way to crash servers and get their name in print. Think of them as the ultimate losers.

ADMIN MOD

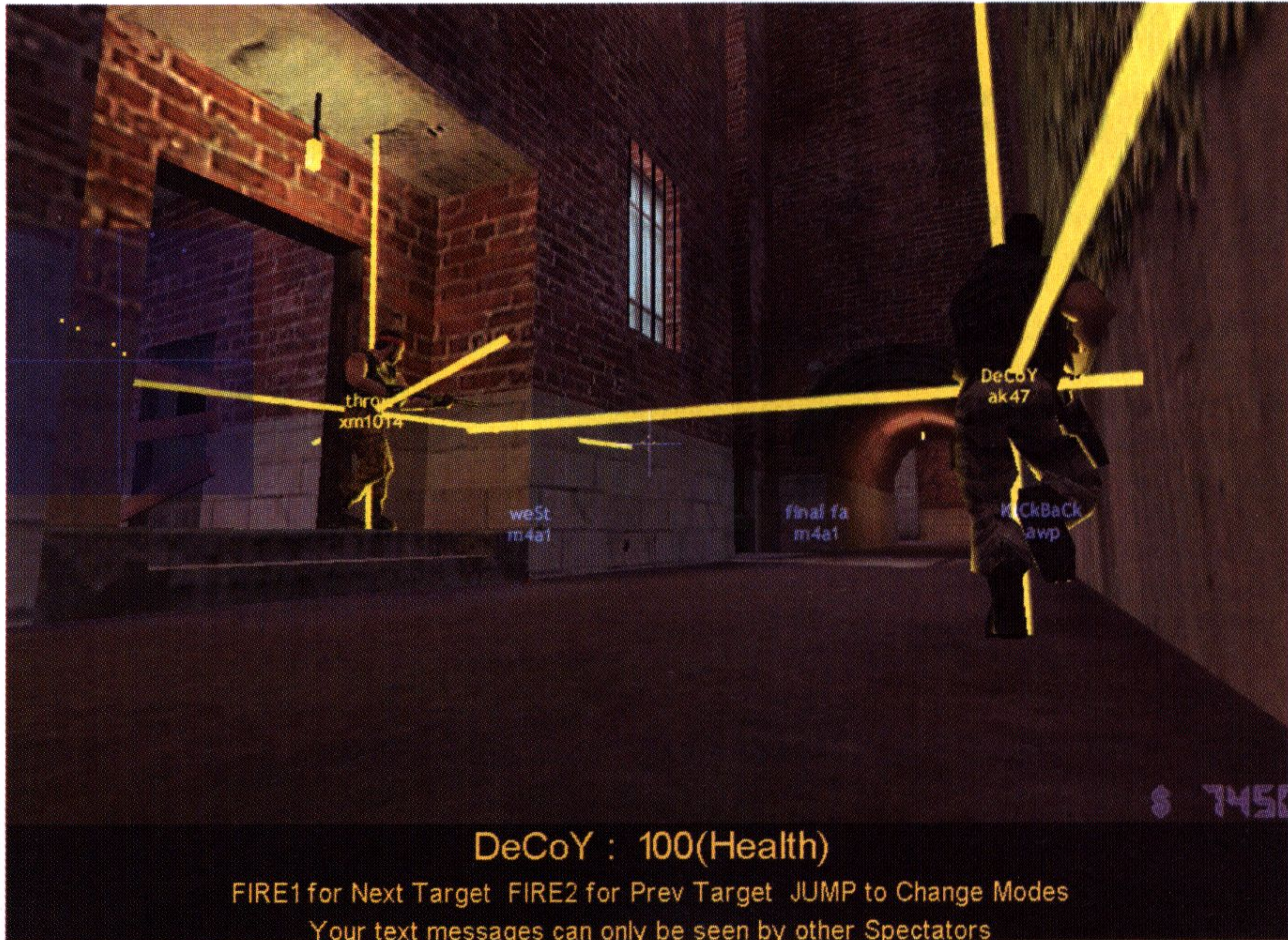
■ www.adminmod.org

A server-side modification installed on the *PC ZONE* machines, it allows game server operators to customise how their server works, and add features which help enhance the game. Plugins are freely available, a number of which have been designed with anti-cheating in mind. The only trouble is, none of the ones we tried worked, allowing OGC and Half-Life Hack users to breeze past unnoticed.

cheats to play you'd better be double sure you're not going to get caught. Because the consequences look serious.

HOW TO SPOT A CHEAT

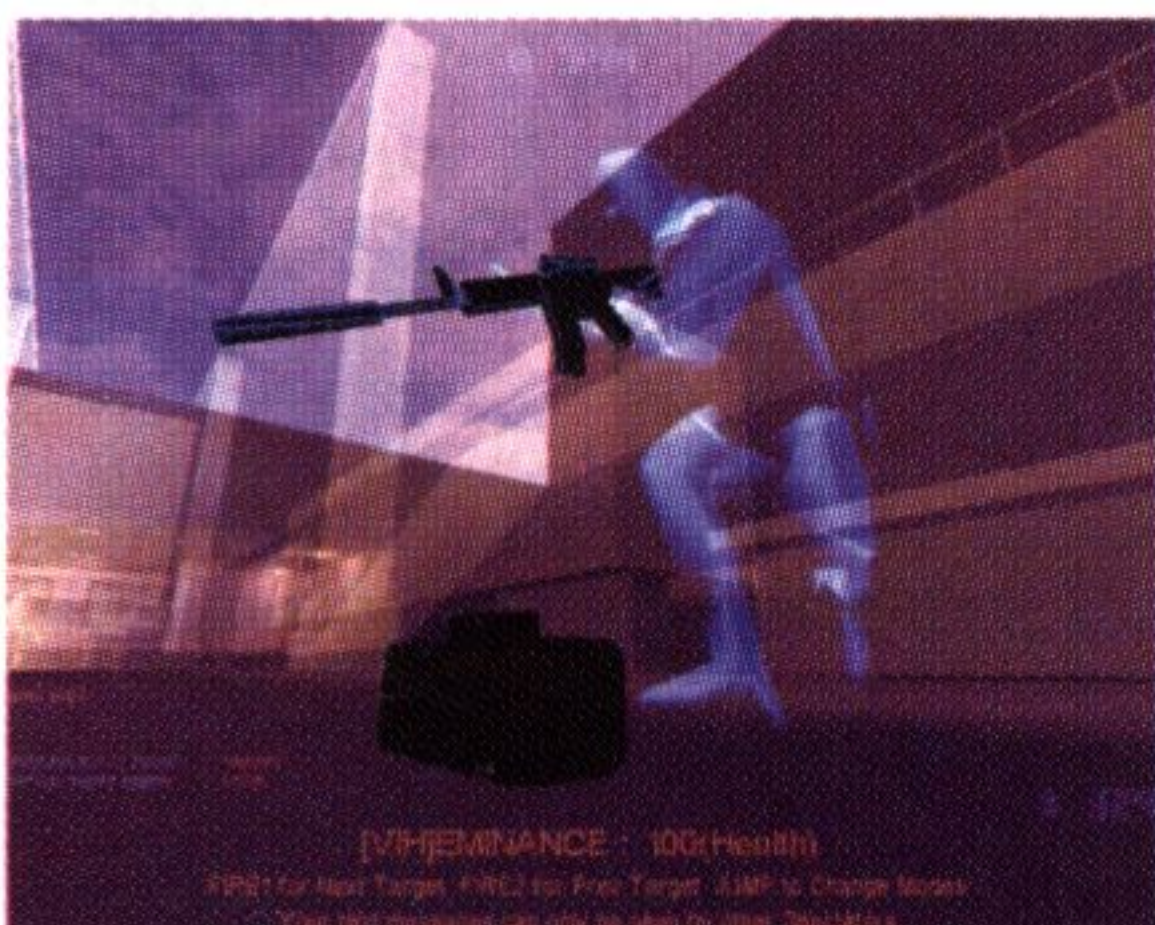
Perhaps the most common question these days is, "How can I tell if someone is cheating?" Sadly, the simple answer is you can't. While careless aimbot users identify themselves after only a few minutes of play, experienced cheaters are far harder to identify. Many veteran fraudsters rely on radar and wallhacks, and



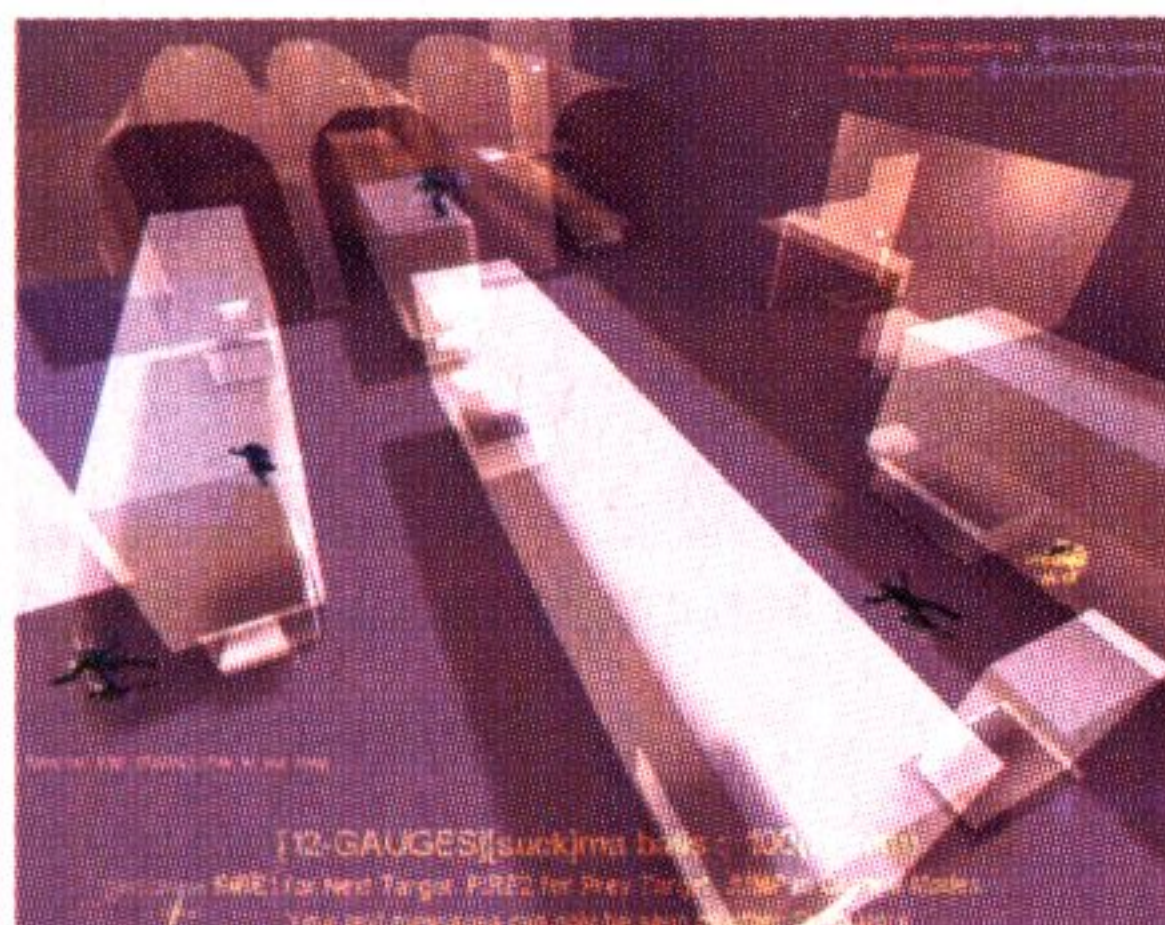
Yellow terrorists heading towards a blue counter-terrorist ambush. We know it, but do they?

OGC OH MY GOD

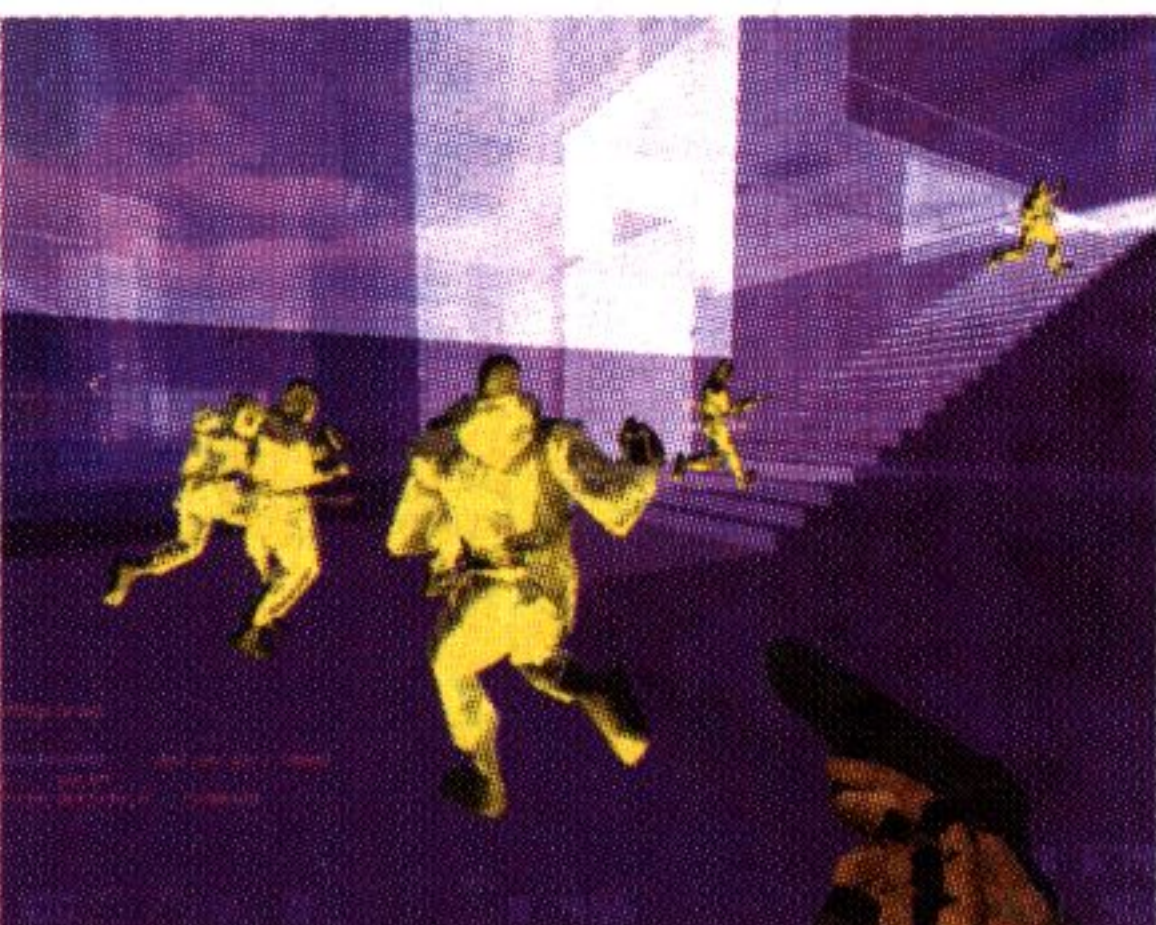
AMONG OGC'S MANY DUBIOUS TALENTS, ITS OPENGL WALLHACK FEATURE IS CERTAINLY THE MOST MEMORABLE. HERE WE PRESENT A ROGUE'S GALLERY OF GRAPHICAL HACKS THAT MAKE CHEATING EASIER THAN FALLING OFF A LOG



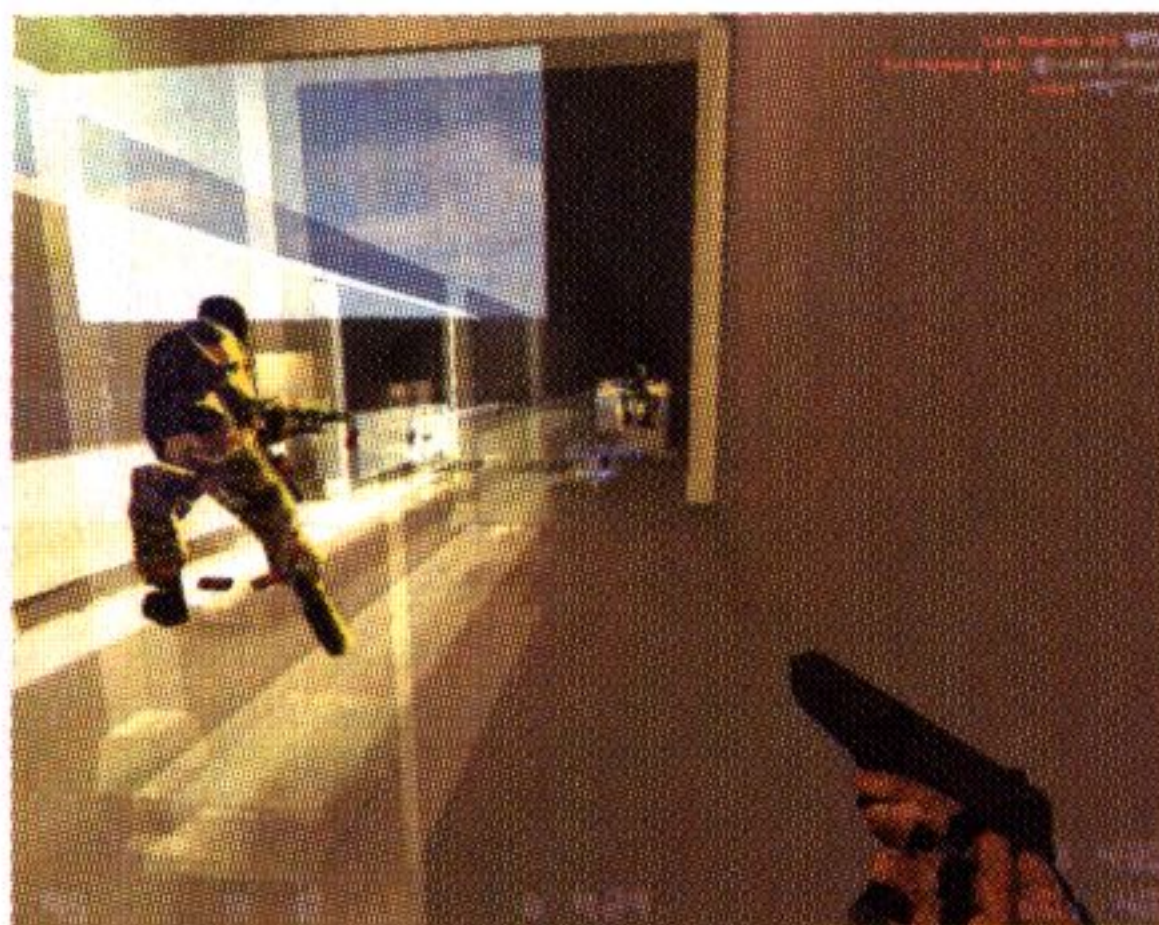
A ghostly spectre arrives to defuse the bomb.



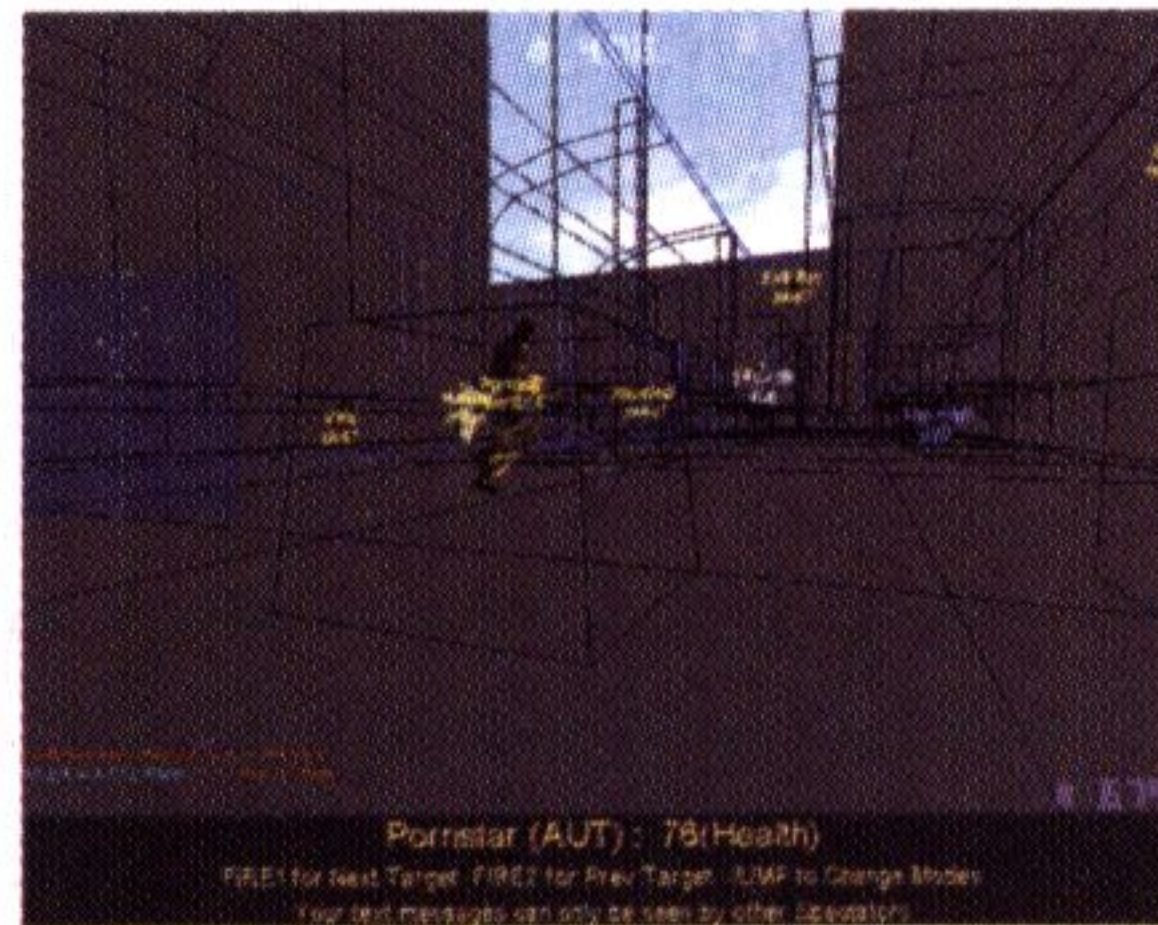
The train yard as you've never seen it before.



Without walls you can see absolutely everything...



...although sometimes it can get a little confusing...



...and wire frame mode is just mad.

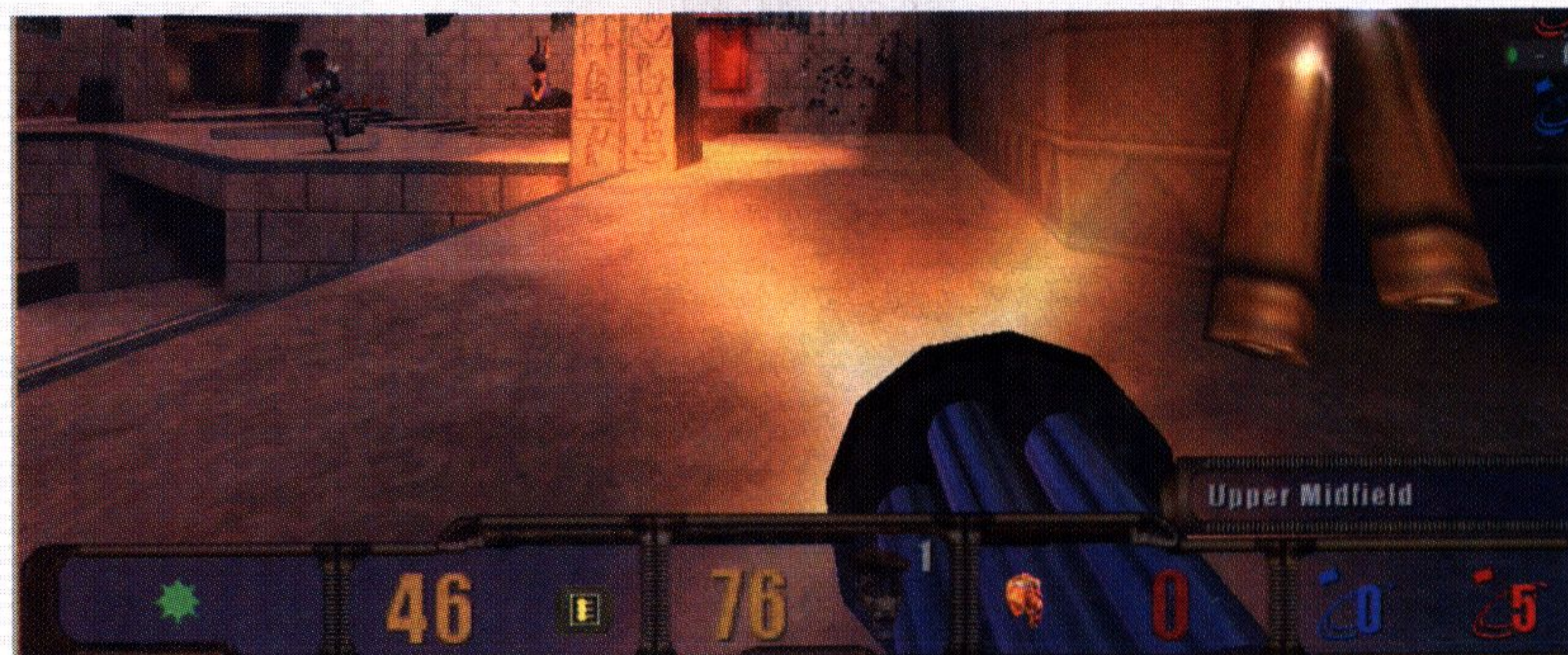
ALLIANCE GAMES v3.3

ON THE CD DVD www.planetquake.com/alliance
SIZE 122Mb **REQUIRES** Needs full version of *Quake III Arena*, patched to v1.31

IN THE in-er-face world of *Quake III* mods, few are as hardcore as *Alliance*. It's a comprehensive mod, with a multitude of features, new maps and enough tweaks and twists to keep even the most demanding *Quake* fan happy. *Alliance* offers all the regular *Quake III* game types – Team Death Match, Capture The Flag and Free-For-All Death Match. But it also adds into the fray a new type called Hold The Flag and combines all of these with the option to play either a regular match, Combat (spawn with all weapons) and old favourite Instagib (railgun only, instant kill). To this already very rich mixture, the *Alliance* team has added

a frighteningly capable set of Bots, rune power-ups, custom weapons including hand grenades, mini-gun and a circular-saw look-a-like that's called a shredder. Your standard kit also includes a grappling hook and pogo (a bit like a mini rocket-jump) and you'd be well advised to learn how to use these as fast as you can as the Bots already have. In team games, the tracker radar, radio commands and voice instructions really come into their own. If you're a *Quake III* addict, you'll absolutely love it.

PCZONE VERDICT **76**
Firm 'n' fruity



Alliance maps have a range of themes... Egypt included.

GENERATIONS ARENA v0.99

ON THE CD DVD www.planetquake.com/wirehead/generations
SIZE 100Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of *Quake III Arena*, patched to v1.31



The Generations slug it out in a mixture of maps.

FANS OF ID Software, who have been raised on *Doom* and weaned on *Quake* will love *Generations Arena*. Sure, *Quake III* has many of the characters of the prior outings, but not the maps and certainly not the atmosphere. Since when did you creep around in *QIII*? You don't, you just shoot the hell out of everything in sight. But no more... *Generations* is here to change all that.

This mod is a homage to the classic id games, using the *Quake III* engine to recreate each 'generation' of characters, weapons and gameplay styles. Strogg Troopers can fight against Earth Soldiers, Doom

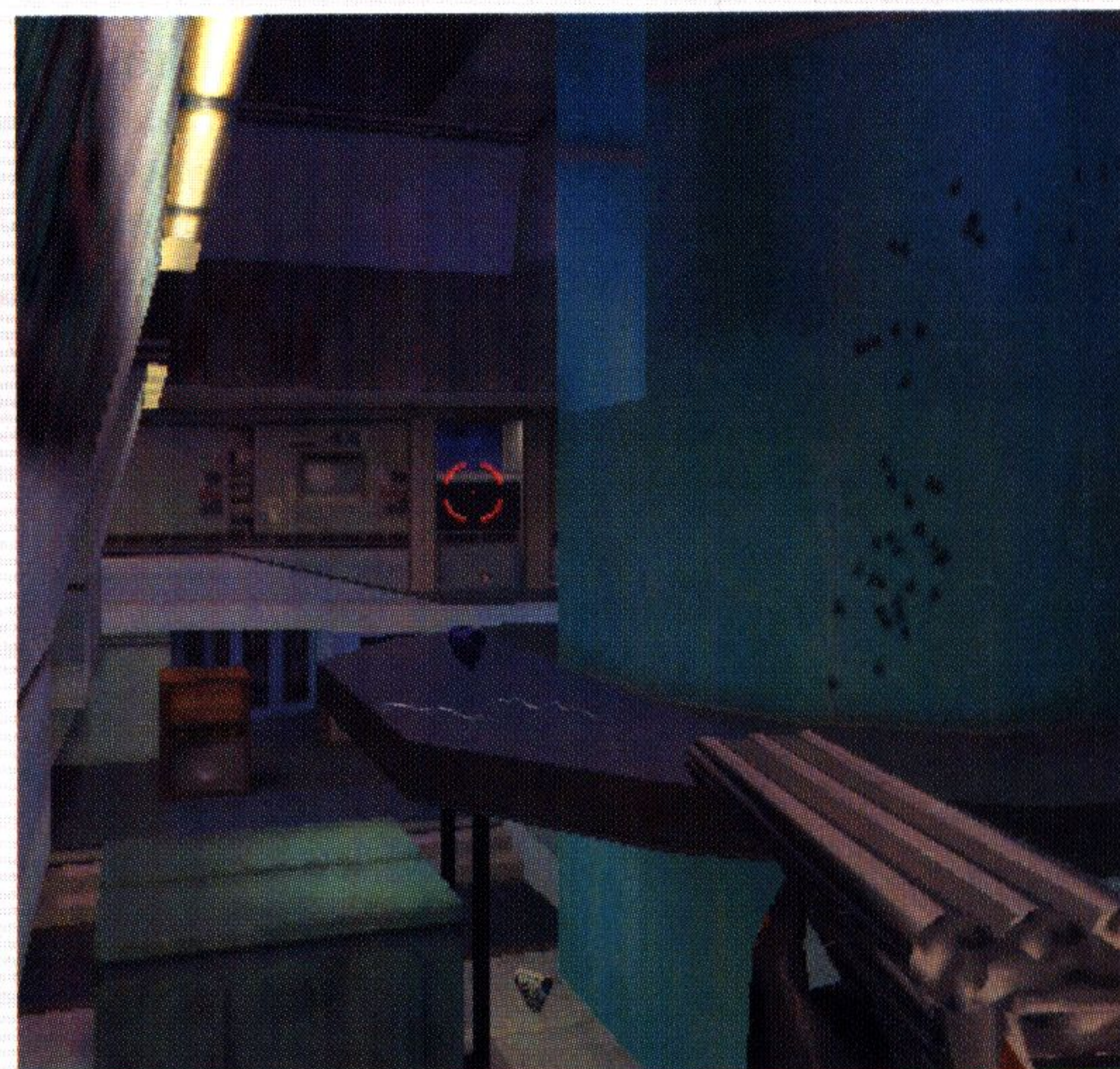
Warriors scrap with *Quake* Arena Gladiators. Each game character is given the appropriate weapons to kick some serious ass and railguns, nailguns, chainsaws, lightning guns and even the good old BFG will be pressed into action. Gameplay modes are all familiar fodder too.

So, of course, there's nothing new here, but then that's not the idea. It's a mod for long-term id fans that will hopefully appeal to the newer convert too. And it's damn good fun.

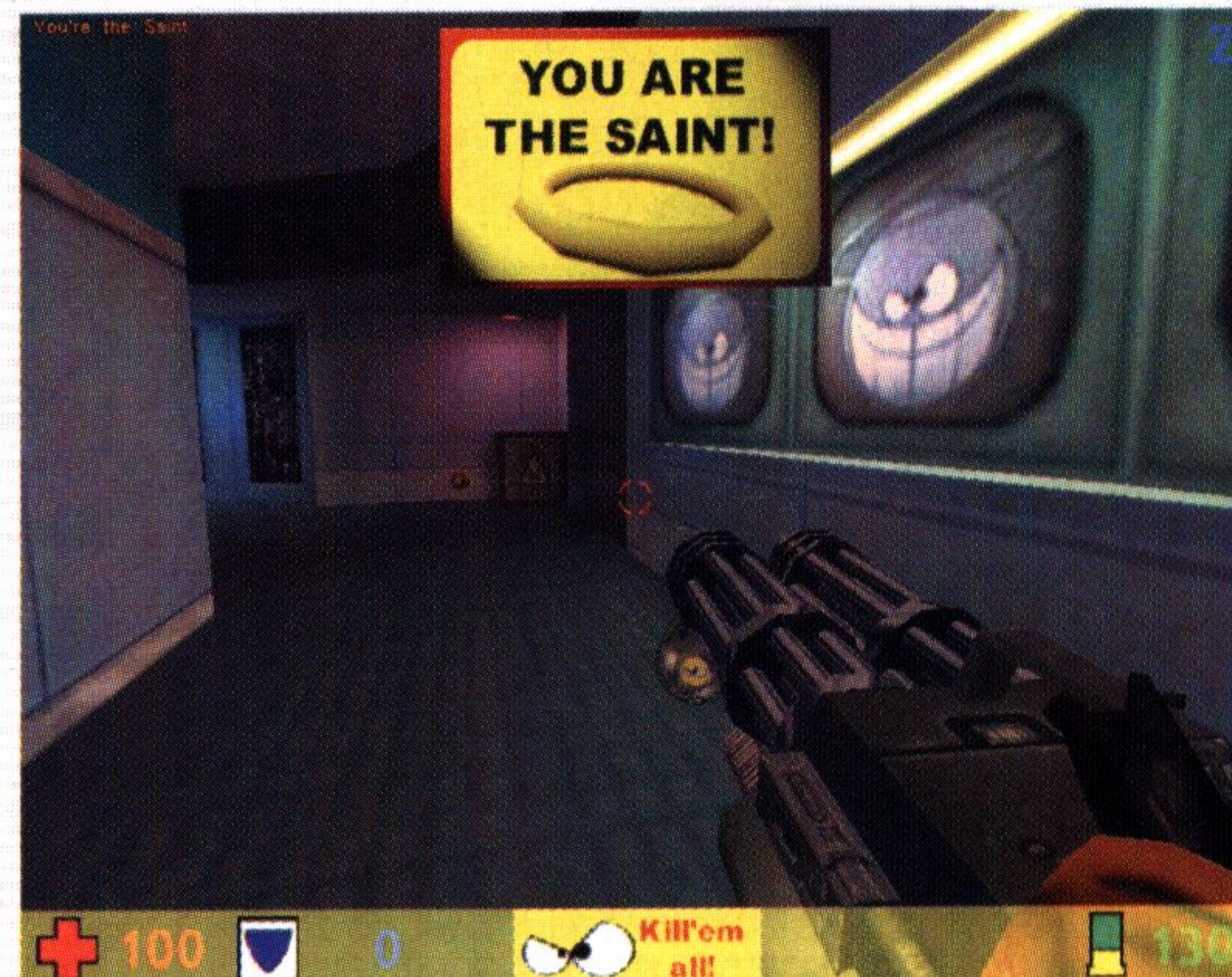
PCZONE VERDICT **74**
id's greats revisited

HOLY WARS v1

ON THE CD DVD www.planethalflife.com/holywars
SIZE 11Mb **REQUIRES** Requires full version of *Half-Life*



Don't kill too many sinners or you'll become a heretic.



A saint with a gatling gun... party on.

HOLY WARS has one of the most novel gameplay ideas around, and while this version is getting a bit long in the tooth, *Holy Wars 2* is getting fitted into its funky new cassock, so it's well worth dusting off the original and recapping what it's all about.

Here everybody starts as a sinner, until someone picks up the halo and becomes a saint. The remaining sinners have to kill the saint and take his halo. They can frag each other, but they won't get any points for doing so – only the saint gets those. In fact, if a sinner kills too many others, he becomes a heretic and is limited in what weapons he can use. He's in deep trouble until he either kills the saint or is wasted himself.

Holy Wars includes new weapons, maps, graphics and sounds. They're fine, but looking tired, so thank goodness for *Holy Wars 2*, which promises much in the way of updates. *Holy Wars 1* is fine for a LAN session though, so fire it up if you can.

PCZONE VERDICT **61**
A taster for Holy Wars 2



THE ITALIAN JOB

CD2/DVD Pub: SCi Reviewed: Issue 116 (62%)

When we heard *The Italian Job* was being converted onto PC we danced little jigs of delight. And, although the game isn't exactly the classic it should have been –

see our review on page 70 – it's well worth a punt. Like *Midtown Madness*, the focus is on arcade-style racing, driving up and down steps, hurling your car through the

air, and trying to squash the odd pedestrian. The full game promises copies of some of the more exciting car chases that appeared in the film, but in our

exclusive demo you get a crack at two races. The first is a training pursuit set on the streets of London, and the second is from the classic Mini heist.

HOW TO DO THE ITALIAN JOB

MISSION 1: KEEPING IT UP

SIMPLE. ALL YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS KEEP UP WITH DAVE'S CAR. UNFORTUNATELY IT'S NOT THE EDITOR'S (HE'S ONLY GOT A CITROEN AX) BUT ONE OF THE SPEEDY ROBBERS



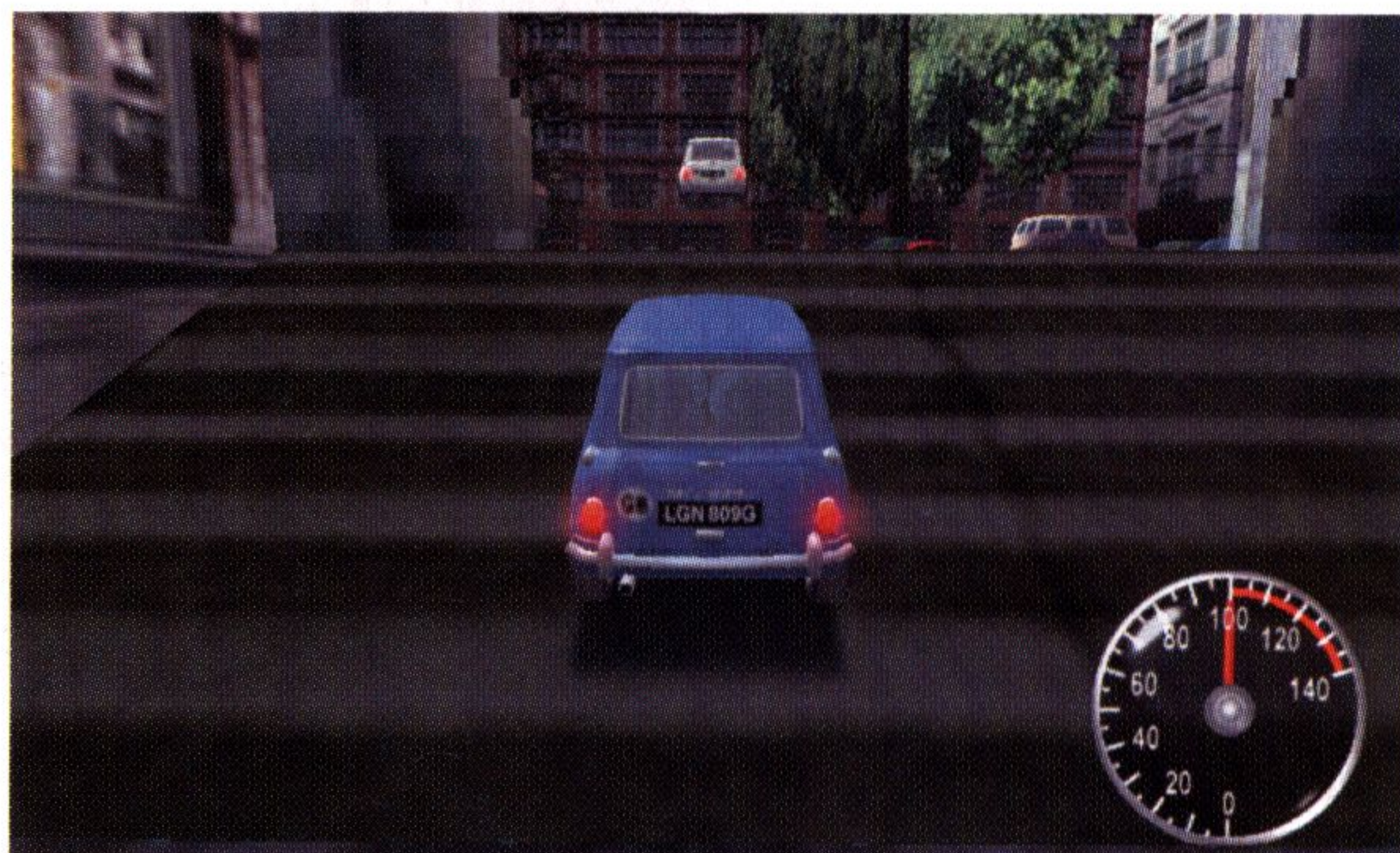
"Ello darlin'."

1 Dave doesn't hang about so speed is of the essence. You don't have to use your brakes too much on this mission, but it doesn't hurt to ease off the gas a little and take a wide line at tighter corners.

2 If you find yourself losing sight of the other car use any shortcuts you see along the way. Jumps are a great way of gaining extra ground but some of them are followed by sharp bends so approach with caution.

3 The handbrake is another good way of turning sharply but it's very sensitive so use it only when necessary and for short bursts. You don't want to end up doing a 360 or you'll fail the mission.

MISSION 2: THE GETAWAY



S'alright, it's a shortcut.

1 Brakes are essential this time, as the streets of Turin are very narrow. If you try to put your foot down through the entire chase you'll end up crashing continually.

2 Use the scenery around you as much as the road; there are little shortcuts you can take to make up time.

FREEDOM FORCE

CD1/DVD Pub: EA Reviewed: Issue 115 (82%)



Take down multiple villains with a handy traffic light and the smack down attack.



There aren't a great deal of superhero games on the PC and despite the fact that we were hoping this one would turn out darker, it's still an engaging RPG and a blast to play, as you'll find out in the two missions this massive demo offers.

TRAINING MISSION 1 CAME A HERO

In this mission you take control of your first hero Frank Stiles aka Minuteman, the patriotic leader of the Freedom Force who combines superior strength and agility with his powerful superhero accessories, the Patriot staff and titanium alloy gauntlets. Follow the yellow arrows and click on the information icons to learn more about Minuteman's skills, targeting enemies and using everyday objects as weapons. Then make your way through

the city, chasing down the thugs and pummeling them into submission.

TRAINING MISSION 4 A NUCLEAR WINTER

This is the first part of the fourth mission in the full game, where you get to exercise a proper team of superheroes: Mentor, the mysterious benevolent alien with mind

control powers, the fiery flyer El Diablo, Minuteman and a hero of your own. You'll get full instructions at the start of the mission on creating your hero and assigning them stats and powers. There's also an online creation manual included with the demo. Use your heroes to take down Nuclear Winter's ice troopers and find out what the commie villain is plotting.



Pick up a few barrels marked 'highly flammable' and let gravity and chemistry do the rest.

GAMEPLAY TIPS

- You can pause the game at anytime by hitting 'space' which allows you to give commands to your superheroes.
- If you're low on health or energy look for the energy-X canisters dotted round the level, there's usually at least one of each.
- Minuteman and El Diablo can both pick up objects and throw them. Use this to your advantage in Mission Four by throwing the flammable drums at the ice troopers.
- Ice troopers have low resistance to fire attacks.
- Take out the gun towers with ranged attacks and well-aimed projectiles.

ARX FATALIS

CD1/DVD Pub: Fishtank Interactive

When the light of the sun finally dies, the world is plunged into darkness and the city of Arx only survives by relocating deep below the ice-covered surface. To make matters worse you've just woken up in a goblin prison cell with no memory of who you are or how you got there. It's going to be one of those days. So starts the demo of *Arx Fatalis*, a first-person

RPG set in a *Daggerfall*-style world. Escape your cell and explore the dungeon while gathering weapons, armour and food. You'll be able to try out some of the most interesting features of the game such as the interactive environment and the *Black & White*-style spell system, where you cast spells by drawing them in the air.



Use your ignite spell to light nearby torches.

LASER SQUAD NEMESIS

CD1/DVD Pub: Codo Games **Reviewed:** Issue 114 (73%)

It's still early days for this turn-based online strategy game, but already since we reviewed it just two issues ago it's has come on leaps and bounds, with new maps, an updated interface and an offline tutorial added. This is the latest version of the full software, which you can play offline free of charge, or indeed online if you can find a subscriber to challenge you. But at US\$15 for a lengthy six-month subscription it's probably the best value online game you can play. Give it a whirl and visit www.lasersquadnemesisis.com when you're well and truly hooked, which if you're anything like us, won't take too long.



One of the best value-for-money games going.

BEAM BREAKERS

CD2/DVD Pub: Fishtank Interactive



Mind that hover-bus.

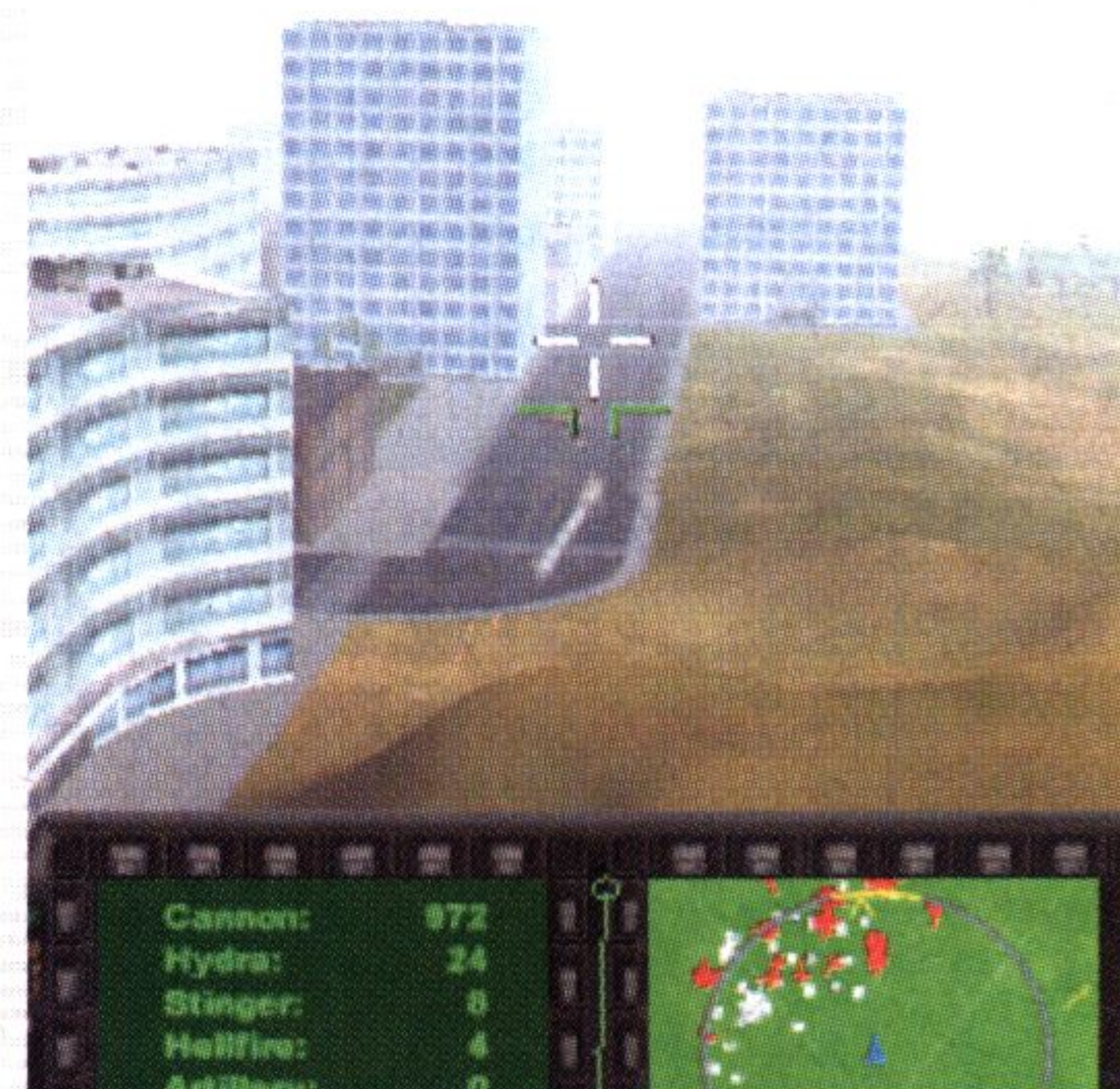
Here's your chance to take to the New York skies with a futuristic hover-racer. Set in the latter part of the 24th century, you start off as a humble taxi driver, lured into

a life of delinquency by a crime boss. This demo offers two missions from the full game, both exhibiting the different sides of *Beam Breakers'* gameplay. The first is a mission-based level where you have to steal a car and return it to your boss without being caught by the police. The packed metropolis, congested with hovering cars will have you bobbing and weaving while trying to get to your destination. The second mission involves a race against four opponents, where regular lane changing and quick reactions are a must if you're to stand any chance of winning. Have a go at the tutorial first to get to grips with the controls and you'll find that before long, you'll be owning not only the skies but your opponents too.

COMMANCHE 4

CD2/DVD Pub: Novalogic **Reviewed:** Issue 112 (78%)

This brand new demo of *Comanche 4* contains multiplayer support and a single-player mission taken from the full game. In the Silver Strike mission you have to escort a limousine containing the Italian President through enemy filled city streets to the airport. The limo has a small amount of armor but can't take many direct hits, so you need to distract the enemies for as long as possible, and defend the airport while the President's plane takes off. The multiplayer aspect of the demo allows up to 16 players to play the deathmatch level Cityscape, online through NovaWorld.



You'll be seeing a lot of this.

ARMY MEN RTS

CD2/DVD Pub: 3DO



A dogbowl one minute, an army of killer toys the next.

Army Men has never been the most successful of franchises but even we didn't expect the latest in the series to give-up on creating a stunningly original name for itself, preferring instead to simply label itself as RTS. Anyhow, this demo contains mission four of the full game where you have to build up a base in the garden and fight your way through the Tans to infiltrate the house. The gameplay is basic but has a few nice touches like the way you have to harvest plastic from discarded toys or dog bowls, and rather morbidly, from the fallen bodies of your enemies and comrades

MOD REVIEWS CD1	
Holy Wars For Half-Life Generations Arena 0.99 for Quake III Arena	Alliance Games 3.0 for Quake III Arena
MOD REVIEWS CD2	
Desert Crisis	
PATCHES CD1	
Anarchy Online v1.91 to v1.92 Destroyer Command v1.1 Half-Life: Opposing Force v1.1.0.8 Medal Of Honor v1.11 Pool Of Radiance v1.4	Return To Castle Wolfenstein v1.3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002 Warlords Battlecry II v1.2 Warrior Kings v1.2
EXTENDED PLAY CD1	
Max Payne Kung Fu Mod 2.0 Worldcraft 3.3	Battle Realms Battle Pack 2
EXTENDED PLAY CD2	
CheatStation - All the latest cheats, tips and walkthroughs for your fave games	Fusion Pack 6.5 For Counter-Strike
MOVIES CD1	
Jedi Knight II	The Elder Scrolls 3: Morrowind
MOVIES CD2	
Blood Omen II Grand Prix 4	Warrior Kings

DVD EXCLUSIVES

ALL THE CONTENT ON THIS PAGE
IS ONLY AVAILABLE ON THE DVD
EDITION OF PC ZONE. TO SUBSCRIBE
AND GET A PACKED DVD EVERY
MONTH, TURN TO PAGE 118

DISCIPLES II: DARK PROPHECY

DVD Pub: Strategy First **Reviewed:** Issue 114 (75%)

This brand new demo for *Disciples II: Dark Prophecy* contains a tutorial that teaches you the basics of the game and a new single-player mission, *The Necromancer's Spirit*. In this mission you'll get a choice of playing as four different lords from three possible classes: warrior, mage and guildmaster. Hunt down the local psycho goth-girl Erhog The Dark before she can spread her evil influences and make everyone listen to Cradle Of Filth. Take over the local villages on your way to her realm, but don't forget to keep upgrading your capital city so that your units can advance to the next level when they gain enough experience.



Is that Nine Inch Nails I hear?



SUPERTEST

In this month's Supertest on page 96 we gathered all the strategy enthusiasts on the **ZONE** team and locked them in a small room to fight it out. If you want to see if you agree with their findings, check out the demos and see if you think the best game won.

THE CONTENDERS

Battle Realms
Cossacks: The Art Of War
Shogun: Total War
Warrior Kings
Z: Steel Soldiers

PLAYABLE DEMOS

Moto Racer 3
Tiger Woods PGA Golf
Tour 2002
IL-2 Sturmovik
Cycling Manager

THE MODSQUAD

The best new releases every month, see page 124 for full reviews.
Navy Seals for Quake III

PATCHES

Command & Conquer Gold
Global Operations v1.1
Return To Castle Wolfenstein v1.31

MOVIES

Call Of Cthulu
Curse: The Eye Of Isis
Divine Divinity
Ghost Recon: Desert Siege
Icewind Dale II
Inquisition
Iron Storm
Just Flight
Roland Garros 2002
Stalker: Oblivion Lost
Team Factor
Ultima Online: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge

CHEATS UNLIMITED

THE WORLD'S NUMBER 1 CHOICE FOR CHEATS & GUIDES

TOP WALKTHROUGHS PLUS OVER **10,000** CHEATS & TIPS

- A = 01**
A.of Emp. 2: Conquerors
A.of Emp.: Rise of Rome
Age of Empires
Age of Empires 2
Airport Inc
Alien vs Predator
Aliens vs Predator 2
Allied Assault
Alone in the Dark 4
Anachronox
Army Men
Army Men 2
Army Men: Air tactics
Army Men: World War
- B = 02**
Baldur's G. 2: S.'s of Amn
Baldur's G.2: T. of Bhaal
Baldur's Gate
Battle Isle: Andosia War
Black & White
Black & White: Creat. Isle
Blair Witch Volume 3
Broken Sword 1
Broken Sword 2
- C = 03**
C&C Renegade
C & C: Firestorm
C & C: Red Alert 2
C&C: R.Alert 2 Yuri's Rev.
C&C: Red Alert
C&C: Tiberian Sun
Carmageddon 2
Champ. Manager 2000
Champ. Manager 2001
Champ. Manager 98
Champ. Manager 99
Championship Manager 2
Championship Manager 3
Civilization 3
Codename: Outbreak
Colin McRae Rally 2
Comanche 4
Command & Conquer
Commandos 2
Commandos B. Call Duty
Commandos B. E. Lines
Constructor
Cossacks: European Wars
Cossacks: The Art of War
Crimson Skies
Curse of Monkey Island
Cutthroats
- D = 04**
Delta Force
Delta Force 2
Delta Force: Land Warrior
Desperados
Deus-Ex
Diablo
Diablo 2
Discworld Noir
Dracula Last Sanctuary
Driver
Dune 2000
Dungeon Keeper
Dungeon Keeper 2
- E = 05**
Empire Earth
Escape Monkey Island
- F = 06**
FA P. Lgue F'ball Man. 01
FA P. Lgue F'ball Man. 02
Fallout 2
Fate of the Dragon
FIFA 2000
FIFA 2001
FIFA 2002
Flight Unlimited 2
- G = 07**
Gangsters
Gangsters 2
- Ghost Recon
Grand Theft Auto
Grand Theft Auto 2
Grim Fandango
GTA: London 1969
Gunman Chronicles
- H = 08**
Half Life
Half Life: Blue Shift
Half Life: Opposing Force
Harry Potter
Hidden & Dangerous
Hitman
Hooligans
- I = 09**
I. Jones: Infernal Machine
I.G.I. (Project)
- J = 10**
Jedi Knight 2
- L = 12**
Little Big Adventure 2
London Racer
Longest Journey
- M = 13**
M&M: Mand. of Heaven
Master of Olympus
Mat Hoffman's BMX
Max Payne
Medal of Honor: All. Ass.
Men in Black
Midtown Madness
Midtown Madness 2
Monk. Island 2 (Revenge)
Monkey Island (Escape)
Monkey Island (Secret of)
Monkey Island 3 (Curse)
Moto Racer 3
Myst
Myst 3
- N = 14**
Need For Speed 2
Need For Speed 5
- O = 15**
Oni
Operation Flash Point
Outcast
- P = 16**
Pharaoh
Populous the Beginning
Project IGI
- R = 18**
Rainbow Six
Rally Championship 2000
Rally Trophy
Rayman 2
RC Tycoon: C'screw Follies
Red Alert (C & C)
Red Alert 2 (C & C)
Red Alert 2 Yuri's Rev.
Red Faction
Resident Evil
Return to C. Wolfenstein
Robot Wars
Rogue Spear
Rogue Squadron
Roller Coaster Tycoon
- S = 19**
Seadogs
Serious Sam 2
Severance
Shogun: Total War
Sim City 3000
SimCity 2000
Sims
Sims Hot Date
Sims House Party
Sims on Holiday
Sims: Livin' It Up
Soldier of Fortune
Spiderman
Sports Car GT
Star Trek Bridge Comm.
- Star Trek: Armada
Star Trek: Armada 2
Star Trek: Elite Forces
Star Wars: Galactic B'nd
Star Wars: Jedi Knight
Star Wars: Jedi Knight 2
Star Wars: Phantom M.
StarCraft
Startopia
Stronghold
Sudden Strike
Swat 3
- T = 20**
The Curse Monkey Island
Theme Hospital
Theme Park
Theme Park Inc
Theme Park World
Thief: Dark Project
Three Kingdoms
Tiberian Sun
Tomb Raider
Tomb Raider 2
Tomb Raider 3
Tomb Raider 4
Tomb Raider 5 Chronicles
Tony Hawks Pro Skater 2
Traffic Giant
Transport Tycoon
Tropico
- U = 21**
Ulti. Soccer Manager 98
Ultimate Soccer Manager
Unreal Tournament
- W = 23**
Warcraft 2
Warhammer: Horned Rat
Warrior Kings
Warzone 2100
Wolfenstein, Return to
Zeus: Master of Olympus
Zoo Tycoon
- 0-9 = 27**
1602



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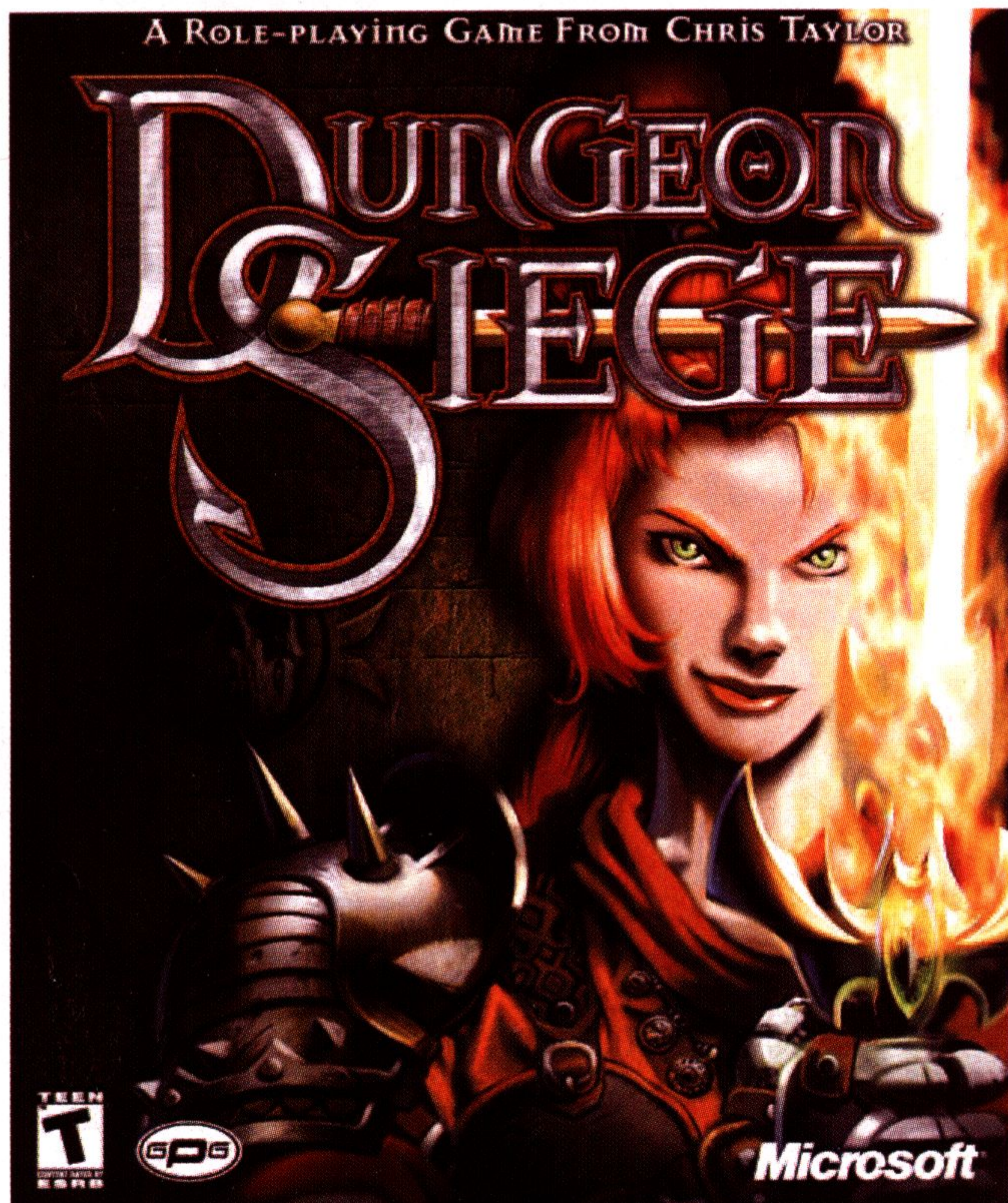
TO MOVE BACK ONE MENU SELECTION



Please ensure you have permission from the bill payer before calling. Each call to the under 16's number will cost no more than £3.00, and will end at 5 minutes. Mobile phone call charges may vary. Please put any comments and questions in writing to Interactive Telcom Ltd, 8 Grants Walk, Pl25 5AA, or email: custserv@cheatsunlimited.com, or call our

24hr Customer Service: (Freephone) 0800 081 6000

ROCK AND ROLE-PLAY



OUT 19 APRIL

Dungeon Siege pushes the envelope of role-playing games with fully animated 3D characters, over-the-top battles, intense special effects and awe-inspiring vertical landscapes. With true 3D environments and an advanced particle system for spells and dungeons that can extend in three dimensions.

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

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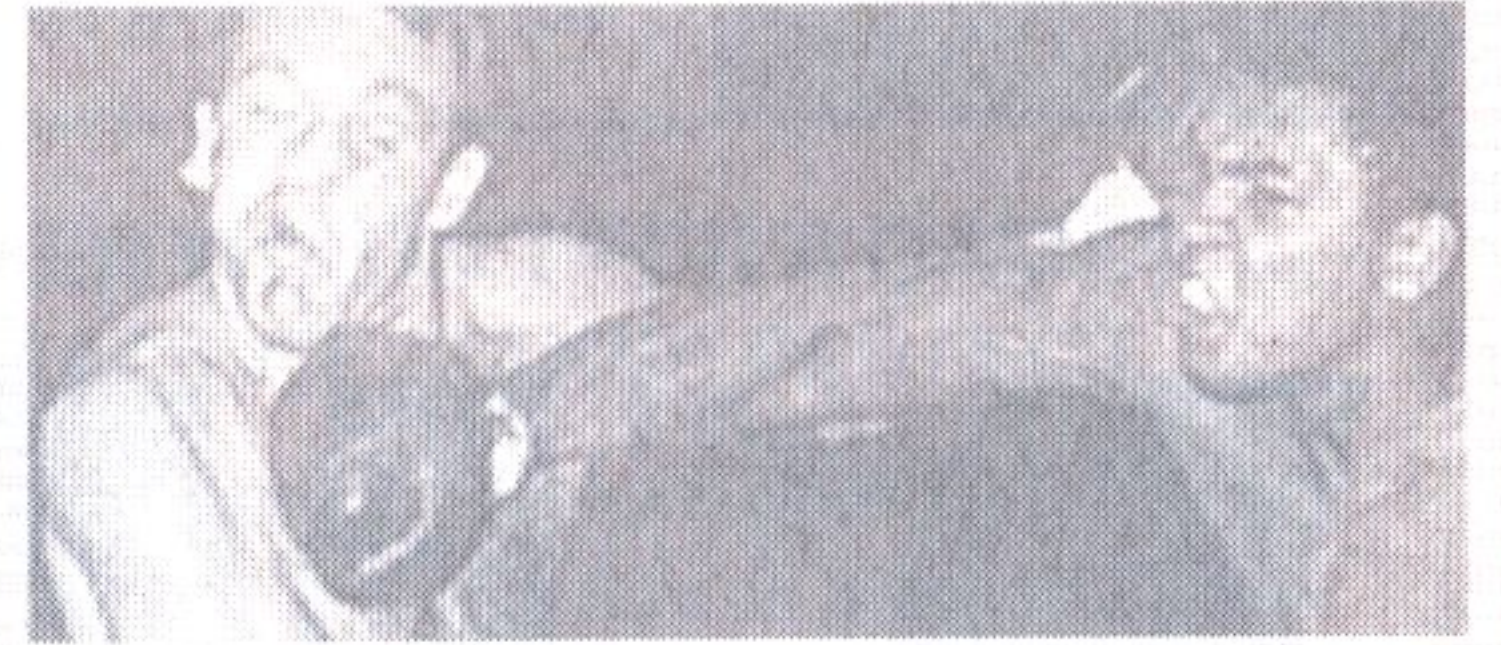
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FIGHT CLUB



Membership is limited to those who love to take their aggression out on others: on **PC ZONE's** servers, the Free-For-All or at LAN parties. **Martin Korda** has the details



Come and join the carnage on Tuesday May 7 if you think you're good enough.

AND SO IT BEGINS.

Again. A new era of the **PC ZONE** Free-For-All, now popularly referred to as Fight Club, kicked off in the dimly lit basement of **PC Zone's** games room on the night of Thursday 21 March. Five **PC Zone** members sat sweating blood while

battling against the cream of our readership in a titanic battle of Allies vs Axis. After a slow start, the server began to swell like a drunkard's bladder, the ensuing firefights hard-fought and bloody. But this is only the beginning. Do you have what it takes to survive the

PC ZONE Fight Club? Do you have the nerve to take us on, or fight alongside us for the common cause? If you do, then tattoo Tuesday 7 May onto your skull and burn the connection details (below) into your mind, and prepare yourself for your day of reckoning. If you dare...

FREE-FOR-ALL

TUESDAY 7 MAY

6.30pm – 9.00pm

*Return To Castle
Wolfenstein server*

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Dave Woods	Kid Unknown
Richie Shoemaker	Zapatero
Martin Korda	Nameless One
Anthony Holden	Shokupan
Mark Hill	Leatherface
Paul Presley	I R Baboon
Matthew Cheshire	Burnside
Phil Clark	Shit Kicker
Danny King-Smith	Ronin
Colin Mackleworth	M.A.C.H.I.N.E.

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS Provided by www.games-world.net

THE **PC ZONE** GAME SERVERS ARE NOW MORE POPULAR THAN EVER AND TO ENSURE ONLY **PC ZONE** READERS CAN PLAY ON THEM, WE'VE DECIDED TO PASSWORD THEM ALL. DON'T WORRY THOUGH, EVERY MONTH WE'LL BE PRINTING THE PASSWORD YOU NEED TO GET FRAGGING

Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.24:27966
Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.24:27968

Unreal Tournament Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.52:7787
Unreal Tournament Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.52:7777

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.49:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.49:27020
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 – 194.93.134.51:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #4 – 194.93.134.51:27020

(PC Zone map pack)

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.50:27015
Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.50:27020

PASSWORD: **viking**

LAN ROVER

STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL ON ALL TOMORROW'S LAN PARTIES...

If you play any multiplayer games and haven't yet discovered the joys of LAN gaming, then get your arse to one of the following. If you've been before, chances are I'm preaching to the converted.

■ I start this month with Who Dares Wins, which will be running on May 18-19 in St Peter's Church Hall, Kinver, West Midlands. It costs £25 for the two days, and will be able to host up to 80 people on three 10/100 servers. You can find out what's happening at www.lan.wdleague.com.

■ There's a www.badlanrising.com event on May 11-12. Anything goes for the usual £25 in the Highfield Hotel on Teeside.

■ Hosting their 19th LAN event on May 18, (£7 for the day) are the Sarisbury Parish Tea Party crew. Go to www.gaming.clanaos.co.uk and follow the links to LAN 19.

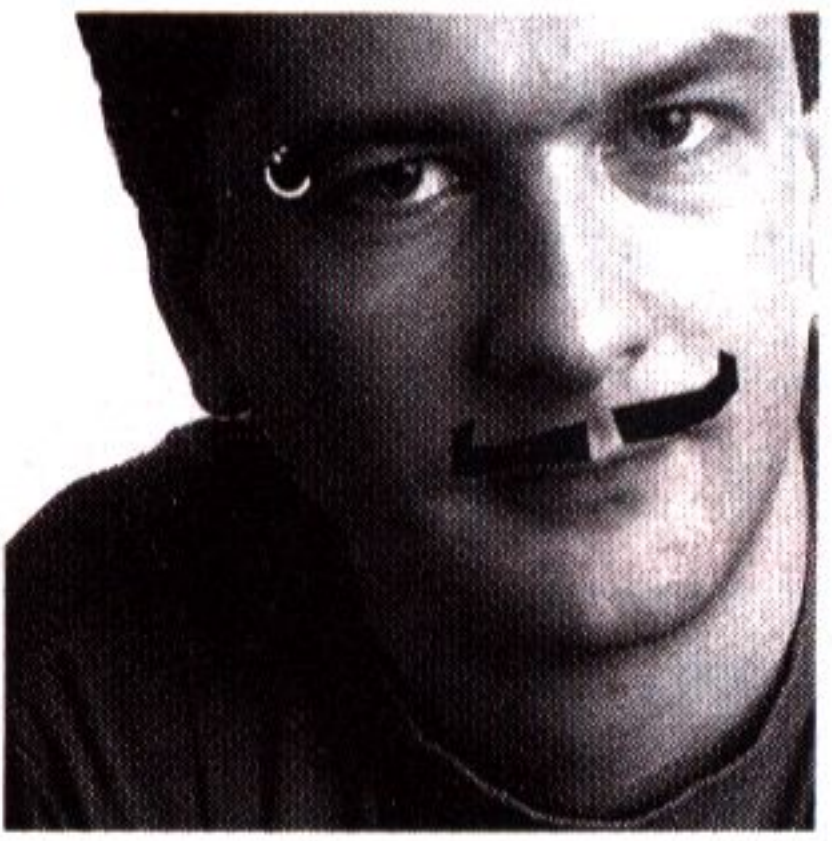
■ www.cyberwarsuk.co.uk are hosting their first ever LAN at the Princess Hotel in Manchester on June 15-16, £25 for the two days with up to 60 of you there to frag it out.

■ Lastly some advanced warning about the big www.hglan.co.uk event held by myself and Paddyboy. We'll be joining 98 others for three days of madness and mayhem over the August Bank Holiday for our second summer event. We will also be hosting our usual cosy event for 25 people during the holidays. Go to our website for more details.

If you want me to mention your LAN party, send beer and bribes to me via scalper@gglan.co.uk. Scalper out.

FREE-FOR-ALL CONNECTION DETAILS

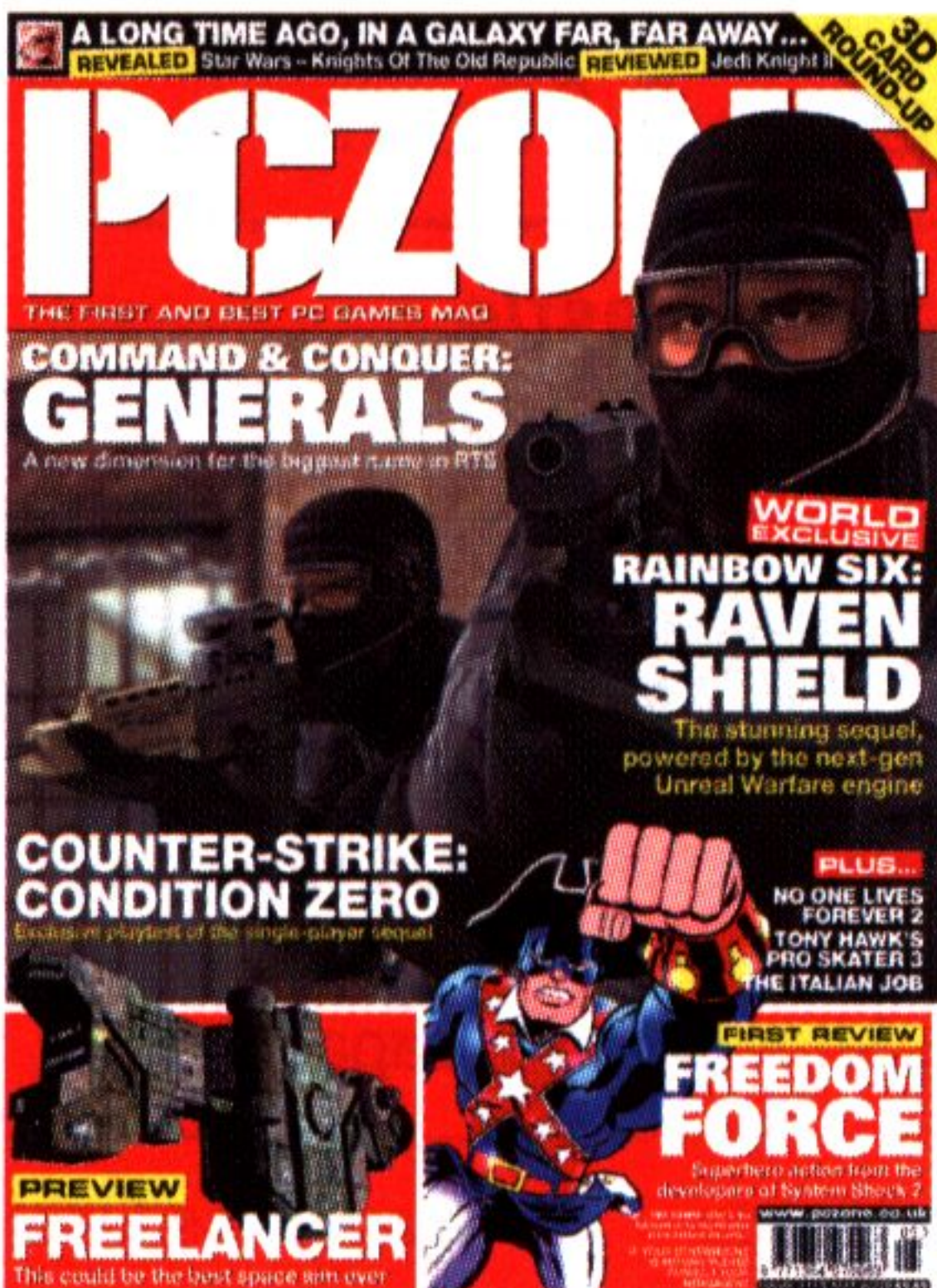
So you think you're a bit of a hotshot do you? Well here's your chance to prove it. To join our May 7 **Wolfenstein** Free-For-All server, first make sure you've patched your version with the **Wolfenstein V1.3** patch on this month's CD/DVD. Then, launch **Wolfenstein** (Multiplayer) and once loaded, click on the 'Multiplayer' button. Check that 'Source' reads 'Internet' and then click on the 'Password' button. Enter **pczone**, (make sure it's written in lower case) as the password, then click on 'OK'. Now click on 'Get New List'. Once it's refreshed, click on 'Server Name'. After the list has refreshed again, scroll down the list and highlight the 'PC Zone' server, and then click 'Accept'. This should now take you to the server. Please note that if you're filtering servers, the game type is WOLFMP. If you experience any problems connecting on the night, then please check our forum at www.pczone.co.uk in case of any last-minute changes or information updates.



MAILBOX

Everybody needs a good rant every now and again, and we're here to listen...

■ **HOLDING COURT** Dave Woods



Issue 2 of the redesign. We've been busily tweaking the look of the mag to try and make it even better. Let us know what you think.

BULGING BAGS

Hi guys. I've discovered a new game. More enjoyable than *Medal Of Honor* and more exciting than a game of *Counter-Strike*. Best of all, it's free. I call it 'going into your local game shop and asking for a decent old game.' (OK, the name may need some work.)

A while back I got a yearning to play *Homeworld* again. Having lost my original copy and knowing it had come out on budget, I went to buy it again. Could I? Could I arse. Most of the spotty oiks behind the counter looked at me like I'd asked for a sponge-bath.

So why don't shops stock old games? If I want a copy of *Thames Racer*, *Deer Avenger II* or any of the other myriad of games that receive less than 20 per cent at the end of your reviews section then my bags would be bulging.

[W92]Baj

It can be a problem. Whenever I go to the local EB I'm amazed at the dross that's on the shelves and horrified by the people who pick up the likes of *Druuna* (Issue 110, 12%) squint at the back and hand it to the bloke behind the



Homeworld - available online for less than a tenner.

counter. If you've got access to the Internet then check out some of the online stores, such as Amazon. It has *Homeworld* on DVD and CD, both for less than a tenner. You might also want to check out the letter below...

BUY! SELL!

Can you pass on the following link to Mark Gordon who wrote in wondering where to sell/trade his

little list of what I thought: fantastically realistic setting with no monsters and zombies, decent graphics, atmospheric sound, pretty-good AI (by today's standards) and great level design. Your review of *MoH* was not flawed, 94 per cent was correct. This is a great game so don't slag it off.

Steve Hayden

Well said that man.

"I in no way condone piracy but it's a breath of fresh air to read an article that doesn't treat us like children"

JON COX

games. I have used the following service a few times with no problems. You might also want to make other readers aware of it: www.gametradings.co.uk

OI CATNEY, NO!

Right, first ever letter to a magazine, so where do I start then... Oh yeah, superb mag, especially like the new look, but what was M Catney talking about in issue 114? How can *Medal Of Honor* be the worst game he's ever played? I played the demo at least a dozen times over and then completed the full game and would like to point out that *MoH* can in no way whatsoever be described as "the worst game I've ever played." In fact, here's a

Defeat Beta 2 and next to it was a sign saying 'on the DVD'. What about your loyal CD readers? I love WWII games and have bought *Medal Of Honor* and pre-ordered *Battlefield 1942*. I'd love to play *DoD* but I haven't got a DVD player. Can you put it on the next CD edition?

Alexis

One of the main reasons we started a DVD version was that we couldn't fit all the mods we wanted on our CDs. *Day Of Defeat* is a case in point - it's over 200Mb which is too big to get on the CD along with all the new game demos that everyone wants to play. Sorry.

IDIOTS UNITE

The future is for idiots. Competent individuals need not apply. Month after month I read of impenetrable levels, impossible finales and immortal enemies. Page after page of cheats, tips and walkthroughs for the criminally inept. Additional difficulty levels will soon be included for pre-beginners under the menu headings of Comatose, Catatonic and Crap. This is a crucial equal opportunities issue: the logically challenged have needs too.

Never has the future looked rosier for those with little or no hand/eye co-ordination. Aficionados of the unloaded weapon, cowardly strategy, and the inability to scale a ladder will shortly be inundated with job

CD BLUES

Something caught my eye in your last issue. In the Mod Squad section, you reviewed the *Day Of*

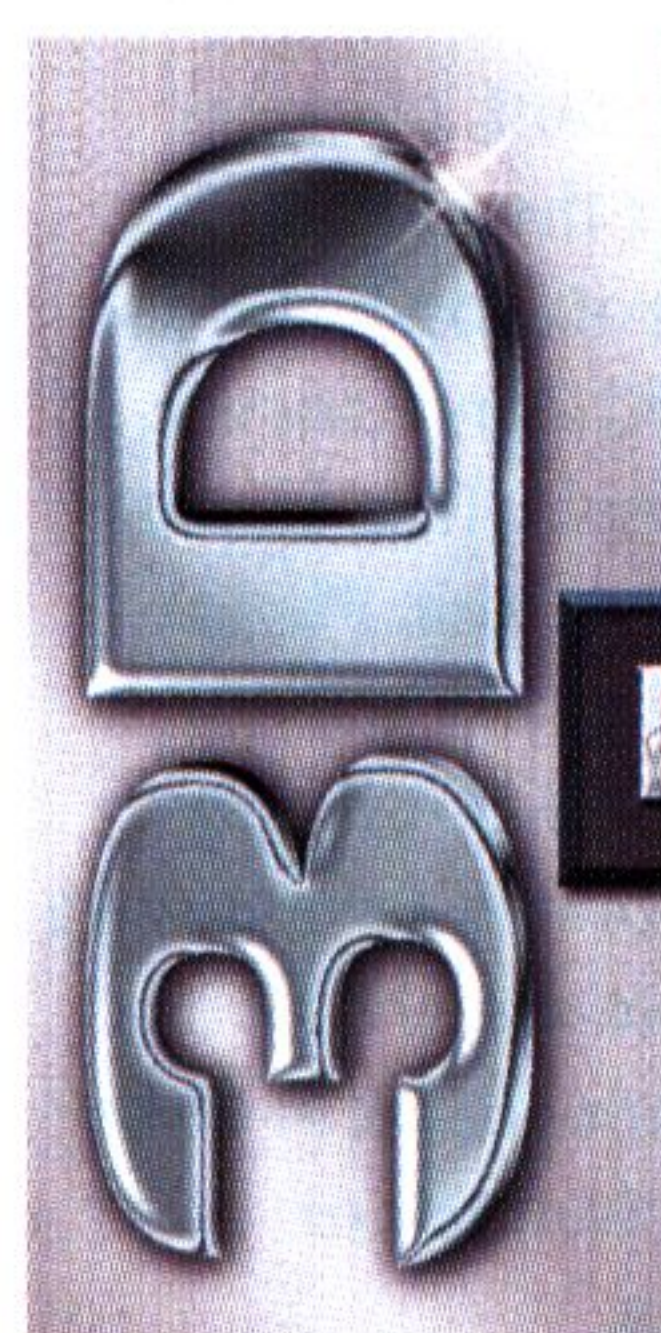


Hands-up who thinks *Medal Of Honor*'s the worst game ever. Catney, you're on your own.

GOT SOMETHING TO GET OFF YOUR CHEST? WRITE TO...

MAILBOX, PC ZONE, 30 CLEVELAND ST, LONDON W1T 4JD, OR E-MAIL: LETTERS@PCZONE.CO.UK

■ The Letter of the Month wins a spanking new graphics card courtesy of the lovely people at Creative Labs. The Blaster 4 Titanium 4400 is as good as the name suggests, and sporting the new GeForce 4 chipset, it gives you more bang than a rabbit stuffed with semtex.



offers from developers with no moron currently on the payroll. Such positions will include senior bullet wasters and anticlimactic level designers. All applicants should have a track record in keyboard twister and mouse mat cramp. Arthritic finger joints will be an advantage.

Thanks to this new breed of moronic game designers myopic snipers and suicidal grenade lobbing will finally be rewarded with the perennial joys of wandering aimlessly until you've forgotten the whole point of the mission. Your country needs you. Play Moronically.

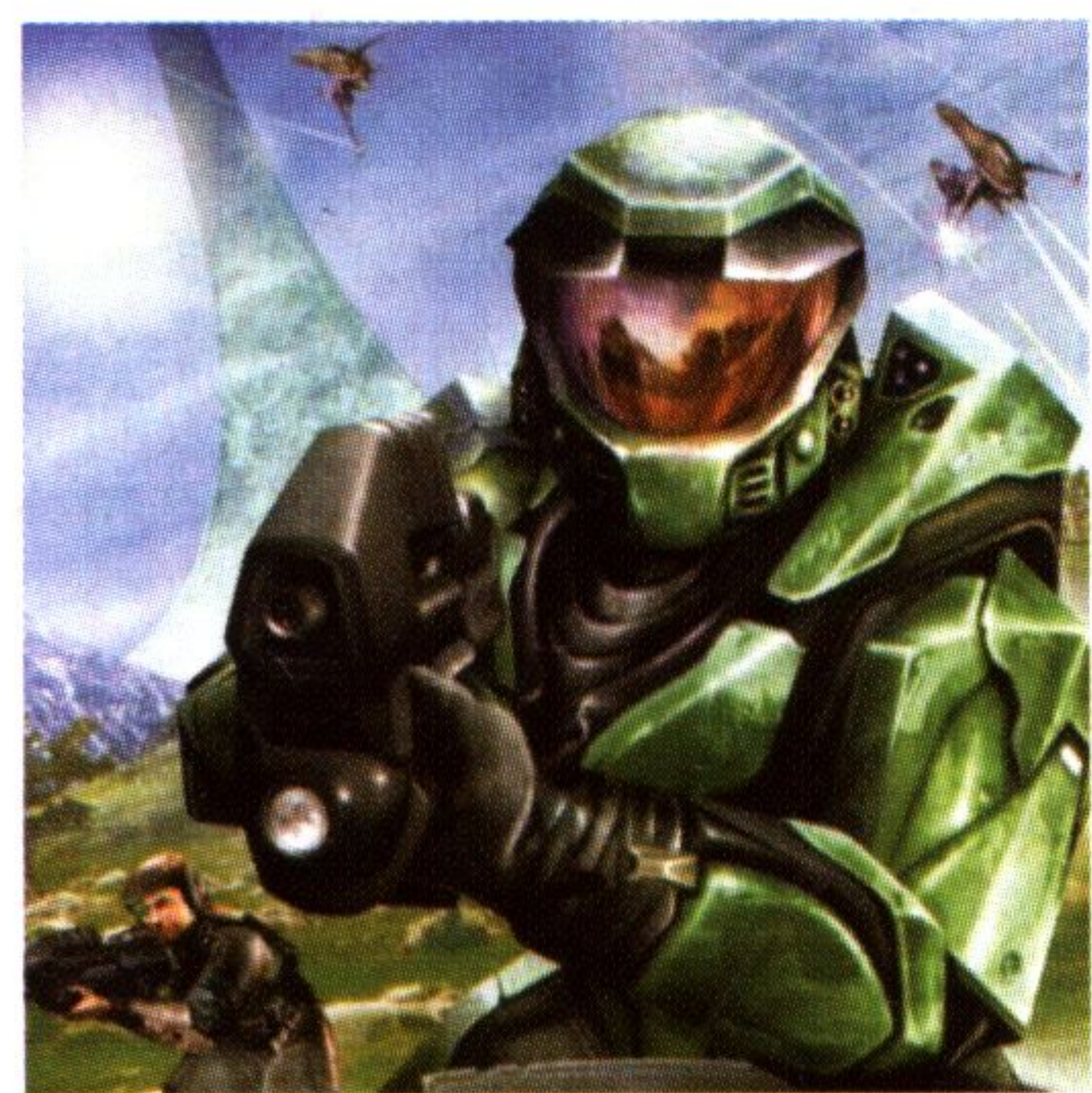
Craig Knight

Oh, so you're the one person we managed to finish above in our recent reader's free-for-all.

MICROSOFT

Guys, is Microsoft taking the piss by putting an advert for *Halo* in *ZONE* or what?

Perhaps you could forward my email address to them so



Come on Gates, sort it out...

that we can organise a time when they might like to come round and shit on my floor...

Dan Marshall

WOT NO GAMES?

I was particularly drawn to your recent feature on software piracy since it's extremely rampant in Malaysia, where I live. I couldn't agree more that the price of software is a major factor, but over here another big reason is the availability of games.

Things are slightly better now, with publishers coming up with

Asia Pacific versions, namely EA Games, publishers of *Medal Of Honor* (which I own the original of). So, prices are slightly lower and availability is higher. Nevertheless, there is no Asia Pacific patch to accompany it and no technical support.

What I don't understand is why do international publishers overlook the need to market their games across the world. I'm one of the thousands of hardcore gamers in my country. It's just too bad we can't get what we want without turning to piracy.

DC

It makes you wonder why they bother, or rather, why they don't. The tits.

You've finally forced me to put pen to paper after some 20 years of gaming by covering my two favourite topics: cheating and piracy. Why do I seem to be the only person left who won't cheat or copy games? People copy games because it's cheap and easy, but while I'm convinced that retail prices are too high I won't starve developers of their pay just to save a few quid.

As for cheating, it's just a scourge. No one benefits and it can only be ego that drives you to beat someone via these means. I find it annoying to spend 20 minutes looking for a server to play on that I like only to have it spoiled by one little snot getting off on our grief. Be warned though, this is serious, ruining it for everyone is the only result. Cheat and the server will empty and you'll be left playing with yourself.

Jem

Online cheating has got to be one of the most pointless pursuits in existence. Phil Wand shows you how legitimate gamers are trying to solve the problem on page 122.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

At last, a realistic and unbiased look at software piracy. I in no way condone piracy but it's a breath of fresh air to read an article that doesn't treat us like children and shows the pros and cons of the situation on the industry as a whole.

I'm 29 and in my youth had a spectrum. It was common practice to 'share' games with friends and we never thought it to be illegal. I now have a PC and realise that 'sharing' games is wrong as is buying copies of games, and there is a better way.

Contrary to your interview with Surprisingly Articulate Pirate Kid (SAPK) many reputable retailers will take back an unwanted game within a short time as long as you have the receipt, and Electronics Boutique give a 10-day no-quibble money back guarantee. This means that I get to try a game and decide if I feel it is worth the asking price.

If I like the game I keep it, if I don't I simply uninstall the game and take it back, safe in the knowledge that neither I or the games company have been ripped off. As far as I can see, this is a win-win situation.

Jon Cox

BALLS

I enjoy reading the Reality Check feature in your magazine every month, and was going to suggest paintballing but lo and behold, the new mag arrives and there you all are, balling away in the Surrey forest. You left out a couple of important points though: bullets don't bounce off in real life, and I was saved from many an early sit-down after around 10 paintballs bounced off various delicate parts of my body. And at just under 9 stone, you can't blame it on any excess fat.

Also, despite what you say, getting hit with a paintball does hurt, especially if it bounces off your throat. CS is pain free. Real paintball/war doesn't exactly have a good scoring/ranking

READER REVIEWS

FANCY A CAREER WRITING FOR A GAMES MAG? WELL PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT...

We want reviews of the games you love or the ones you hate. Each one should be between 50 and 350 words and come with a score out of 100. The best one wins a game from the current charts. Send your review to the standard mailbox address (see boxout) and remember to include your name, address and telephone number.

WARRIOR KINGS

PC ZONE ISSUE 114 - 90%

We said... "Warrior Kings is one of the deepest, most beautiful, groundbreaking RTS experiences of our time. It's the way forward for the RTS genre."

I realised while playing *Warrior Kings*, that for the first time ever in my long experience of playing RTS games that I was using some real strategy. Gone were the thoughts of building masses to overwhelm the enemy and instead thoughts of subtle feints and traps began to form in my brain. Never before had I come across a game where the advantages of terrain and selection of unit types really



made such a difference. Even troop formations were a useful tool with noticeable advantages and restrictions.

Having said that, though, I don't think the game's a classic as I found some nasty problems in the initial release. A few times during the single-player campaign game, story triggers failed to activate upon cue leaving the game stranded. The glorious scenery and graphics, although stunning, reduced even my GeForce 3 to a crawl in some situations even with minimal graphics options selected. The general flow of the game was often upset by being forced to pause the game to issue orders, as the interface often felt somewhat slow and clumsy and lacked intuitive information (now which of those boats did my hero climb onboard... oh well empty the lot then). Worst of all, though, was that I completed the final level by mistake. A single wandering spearman from my ranks stumbled upon the evil wizard type just as he summoned hordes of undead warriors. Said Zombie army then casually stood by and watched while my spearman poked the evil one for a whole couple of minutes until victory was ours... oh well.

Despite a few problems, all in all, it's a great game - certainly the way forward for 3D RTS's. I don't think it'll have the replayability of games like *Civ* or even *Starcraft* but I look forward with the hope it has given to the genre - maybe 3D RTS has reached puberty....

Robb Howell
VERDICT 83%

READER REVIEWS

▲ BRIDGE COMMANDER

PC ZONE ISSUE 114 – 83%



We said... “Bridge Commander is probably the finest example of capital ship combat you’ll find on PC – Star Trek or otherwise – and one of the few Star Trek games over the years that has used the license wisely.”

Before you start freaking out about the prospect of attending conventions with a group of strange people that insist on challenging you to a fight to the death over your limited edition print of Kate Mulgrew, I should mention that this is one of the most easily accessible *Star Trek* games I’ve played in a long-time.

It takes one of the hallmarks of modern *Star Trek*, that being the insanely cool space battles, and translates it perfectly to the PC. You don’t need to use a joystick and you can’t turn on a dime – it’s all about careful tactics and power management, about issuing orders, targeting subsystems and always making sure that your ship isn’t blown to pieces because you forgot about your dorsal shield failing.

Talking of dorsal shields, although *BC* throws the odd bit of techno-babble your way it never feels too confusing or overwhelming. Its mission structure is also finely balanced and never gets too repetitive or boring.

Tony Goff

SCORE: 87%

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

PC ZONE ISSUE 112 – 88%

This game looked perfect and I was convinced it would be brilliant. I cruised through the first level but suddenly I found myself stuck. What should I do? But, even though the game is very confusing and the story isn’t particularly brilliant, the graphics and the intelligent AI make this game a beautiful and realistic piece of work.

The levels are visually stunning, and the atmosphere realistic, but the single-player story, gameplay and the ending aren’t as good as I expected them to be. They’re not rubbish, just not as good as I thought they’d be. However, this doesn’t decrease the score much as the multiplayer game is amazing – better than *MOH: Allied Assault*. Put bluntly, I love the multiplayer, and I quite like the single-player game, and I’d recommend the game to anybody.

Glynn Jones

91% (MULTIPLAYER 97%)



No-one told us we had to get up at eight in the morning. Now that really hurt.

system and most importantly, *Counter-Strike* is virtually free.
Gareth Hughes

We know it hurts and we’ve still got the welts to prove it.

GOLDEN SHOVEL AWARD

I have been a subscriber to *PC ZONE* for some time now, and I have never felt so compelled to write a letter of complaint to anyone, as strongly as I do now. I am of course referring to the editor’s comment in your May issue. “Computer games are, in the main, ignored by mainstream journalists, who are too busy reporting the fact that the Queen Mother managed to make it to her mini-bar unaided”.

Apart from the poor timing, coinciding with her passing, this was an old women of over 100 who had served this country through many challenging times. It may not mean much to you, but as a member of the Royal Air Force, I am extremely proud to be British and am proud to serve Queen and Country.

Let me ask you, Dave Woods, what have you done for this country recently, and why do you think you have the right to bad mouth the Crown? At the very least I expect an apology in the next issue.

J Putland

I might as well start off with the apology as I can

shamefully confess I have done nothing for my country recently. In my defence though, the editorial was written a couple of weeks before the Queen Mother passed away, and it wasn’t supposed to be a dig at the her, but rather at the tabloid press. Luckily most people remember her fondly for liking

RETROGRADE

I would just like to say how much I enjoy reading your Games That Changed The World feature. I like RetroZone but it’s good to go into the classics in even more depth, dishing the dirt and heaping the praise where it’s meant to go. Can I just offer a few suggestions for the future?

“It’s good to go into the classics in even more depth, dishing dirt and heaping praise where it’s meant to go”

COLIN JACKSON

a drink, it was one of the things that made her the character she was. Sorry again though to anyone who was offended.

Doom, Theme Park, Half-Life and Sensible Soccer all deserve to go down in the annals of *PC ZONE* history as games that really did change the



Look out for more of your favourite games in our regular Games That Changed The World feature.

HOT TOPIC

WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE XBOX A DISTANT MEMORY, THE GAMECUBE JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND SONY ALREADY NOTCHING UP TWO MILLION SALES IN THE UK ALONE FOR THE PS2, WE THOUGHT IT WAS TIME TO FIND OUT WHAT THESE BOXES HAVE THAT WE HAVEN'T

WHAT WE SAID:

"Here's a generalisation – PC games are deep, complex and rewarding. Console games are shallow, simple and rewarding. Why can't we have the best of both worlds? The PC has never done arcade-style games very well, despite the fact that technologically it's at least one step ahead of the latest consoles. This is a major pain in the arse. Is it just because this sort of game favours sitting round with your mates in front of a TV?

In the future, the PC is going to get smaller and more portable, with possible wireless hook-ups to every monitor in your house and high-speed connections to every other games player in the world. When this happens will the consoles become obsolete in favour of a single gaming/PC box?

WHAT YOU SAID:

I've always been a PC lover, because the games are deep, involving and rewarding. Most console games are usually dismissed when they're finally released on PC anyway. It's two different audiences: simpletons and complicaterons.

Gigahertz

Consoles do tend to offer more instant gratification, but I mean, think about it. In the olden days they didn't have memory cards for consoles so they couldn't be so in depth. PCs have a nigh-on limitless capability for storage thanks to floppies, CDs, and hard drives. I guess that consoles and PCs are both different, (master of the obvious) and a diverse industry keeps the games fresh and alive. If PCs, or consoles for that matter, could do everything then things could certainly become stale.

KnightkilleR

Consoles are smelly.

Jamtheman

Re: PC v consoles – one word: Emulation. Emulators like MAME or ZSNES allow you to play console/coin-op games. OK, many may take longer to download than to complete, but the majority are great fun to play for a quick blast. Many arcade titles will never be converted to the PC – emulators allow us to experience those missing titles. Regarding the legal angle of emulation – if the games aren't going to be converted to PC anyway, who's missing out on profits made?

GF3TI

It all comes down to multiplayer. Sitting around a PC with four daisy-chained Sidewinders doesn't happen and isn't much fun. Sitting on a sofa with

COME AND 'AVE A GO

Every month, there will be a new Hot Topic on the PC ZONE Website. Check out www.pczone.co.uk, join in the arguments, entertain us or say something intelligent and get yourself in the magazine. The best contribution gets a game from the current top ten. Next month: Has the PC games industry gone 'Tycoon' crazy? (See page 146.)

four pads and a big TV is great and generally happens a lot. There's online gaming but it's nothing compared to having your mates round for a game and then a round of piss-taking.

Ruined

I think age has a lot to do with whether people prefer consoles or PCs. Most people start with a console as a quick and cheap way into gaming, with no game installs, hardware set-up and all. Only people who are really into gaming and can afford the hardware tend to buy PCs, these people therefore tend to be older, more discerning gamers.

Si1va

I think as PC gamers we already have the best of both worlds. There are quite a few excellent arcade games on the PC such as *Midtown Madness* and *Tony Hawk's*.

SLOTH82

It all comes down to the traditional demographic. Despite what the reality may be, console owners are seen as predominantly teenage males and PC owners are seen as approaching middle age with dulled reactions befitting their haggard existence.

As long as the industry thinks like this they're not going to put the resources necessary into providing "arcade games" on the PC. The lines are blurring though: *GTA III*, *Max Payne* and *Halo* all seem to walk the line and prove that a blend can work.

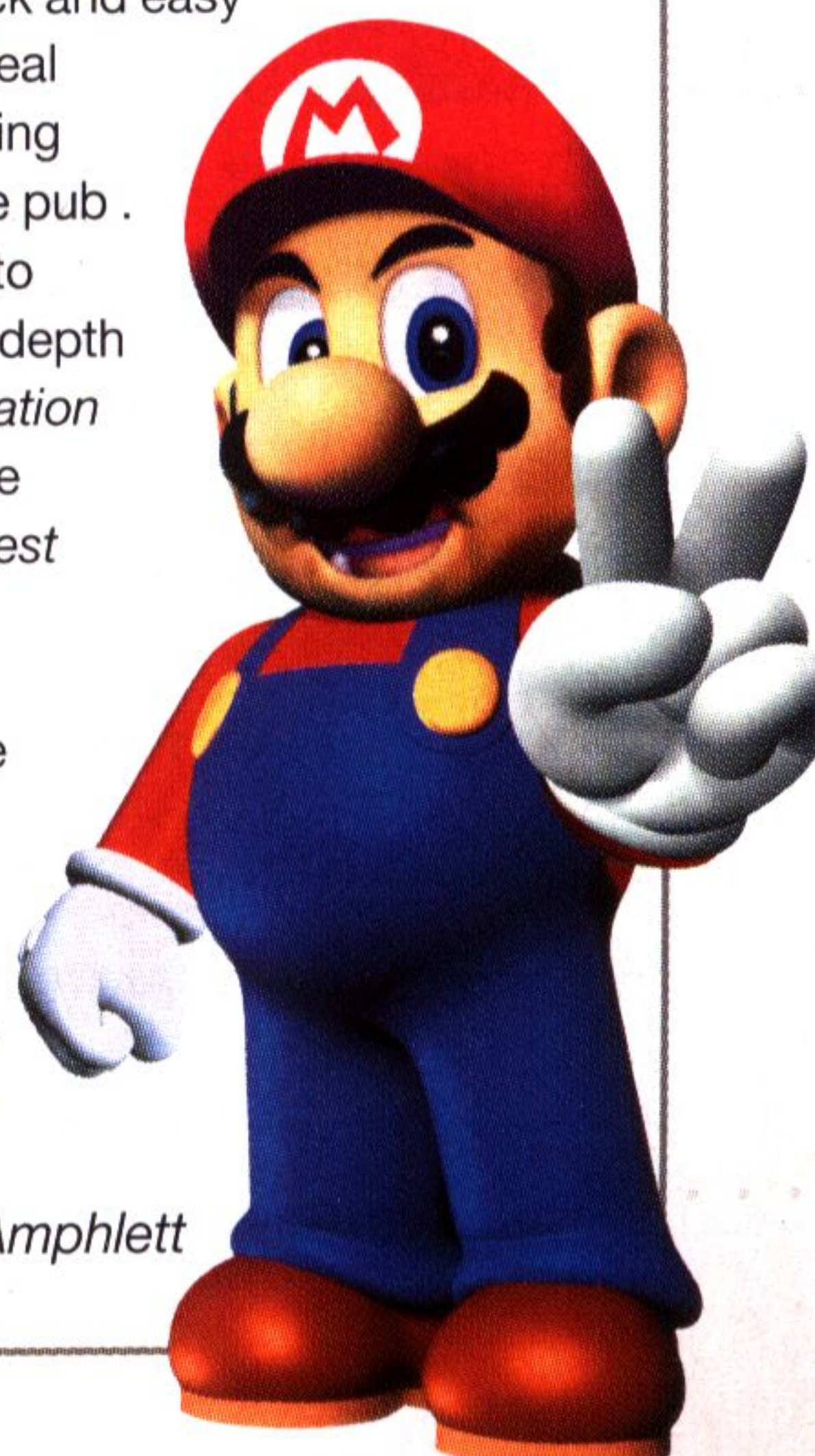
peachFUZZ

I don't think we'll be seeing a single gaming platform any time in the near future. Becoming the market leader and eventually taking over the entire market is what all the large hardware developers are attempting to do right now, but as long as there's competition between them we'll have different platforms.

Princessliar

I have a collection of about 20 consoles but if someone put a gun to my head and made me choose I'd pick the PC. Arcade games are shallow, with quick and easy to learn gameplay, ideal for grabbing and having a quick blast after the pub. The PC should stick to what it does best, in-depth games such as *Operation Flashpoint*, and online stuff such as *EverQuest* and *Counter-Strike*. Leave the simple arcade gaming to the Xbox and PS2. Us PC gamers have much bigger, better and, of course, more groundbreaking fish to fry.

Justin Amphlett



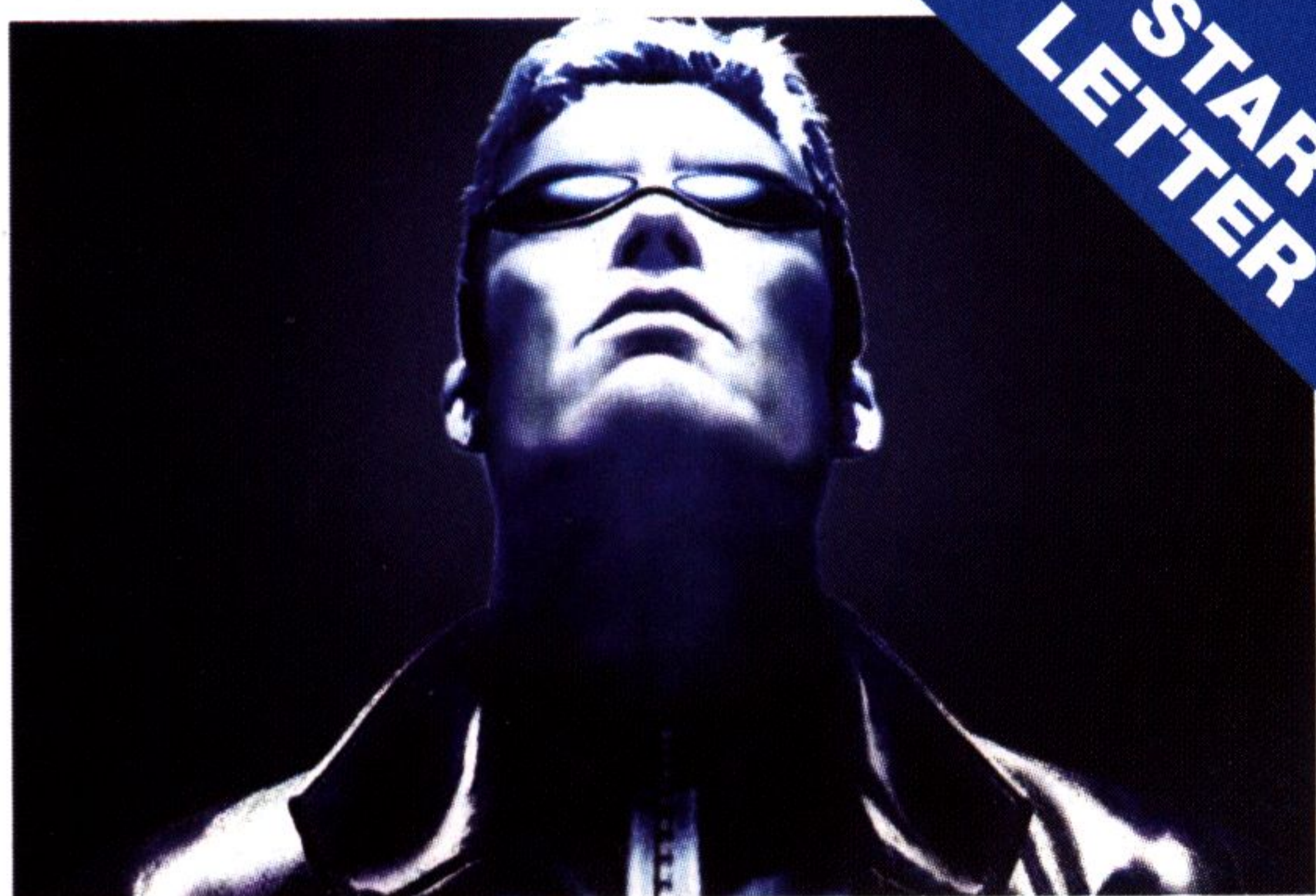
world (or at least mine). Thanks again.

Colin Jackson

Cheers Mr Jackson. You can write in anytime you feel like it. In this month's issue, we are taking a good long look at *Command & Conquer* and, while the series might

have gone slightly off the boil somewhat of late, the original and the earlier *Dune 2*, were both games this series was made for. Funnily enough though, all the games that you mentioned in your letter are already on our list for the future. [KF]

STAR LETTER



EMOTIONAL HOOLIGANS

Loved the second part of Stuart Campbell's piracy feature. It was funny reading the story of "Jimmy McSmith" (whose exploits sounded very much like my own when I was a lad).

The reason I'm writing, though, is not to brag about my ZX Spectrum pirating days, but to congratulate you on hitting the piracy nail right on the head in that in the main, games piracy is almost exclusively down to the fact that games are rarely seen as such valuable "emotional property" as, say, movies and music CDs are. Stuart Campbell said in his article: "The only way to combat piracy is to win the hearts and minds of your audience." That is so true. Games rarely do that because the vast majority of them are derivative, soulless and incredibly badly written (not coded – written, as in scripted).

There are too many pathetic, stupid, amateurish titles out there taking up shelf space, and not enough truly wonderful games capable of hitting a nerve emotionally. Dialogue in 90 per cent of PC games these days is appalling – look at the script in *Max Payne*... What an absolute waste of a good engine.

When was the last time you laughed out loud with – not at – a game? When was the last time you thought: "what a clever script"? When was the last time a game brought a tear to your eye with empathetic emotional content? When was the last time a game made you react emotionally?

Why don't you ask around the ZONE team and see what you can list? I bet it's not much... The piracy issue will never go away if the industry keeps churning out crap. When are developers going to really push the boundaries and come up with emotionally-engaging material? Ion Storm seemed to be heading in the right direction with *Deus Ex*, but there's been nothing significant since (and *Medal Of Honor* is not a good enough answer – it's overrated in my humble opinion).

Can we start a campaign or something? A "Chuck Out The Rubbish Script Writers And Replace Them With Good Ones" campaign? Thanks a lot.

Paul Marks

Don't get us started. On a brighter note, we're going to be dishing the dirt on *Deus Ex 2* next issue, which promises to up the emotional ante another notch. We reckon games are (slowly) moving in the right direction.

THE PCZONE A-LIST

SHOOTERS

MEDAL OF HONOR



It may have taken years but finally there's a shooter worthy of toppling *Half-Life*. Brilliant level design, surprisingly good AI, an unparalleled sense of atmosphere and intensity, not to mention beautifully scripted scenes. It's also the first game that Richie has finished three times in as many months, and the first FPS Rhianna has finished in her life, which gives you some indication of the game's worth.

PUB EA DEV 2015

PCZ ISSUE 112



HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Vivendi DEV Valve Software

PCZ ISSUE 71



ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2

If we rated games on atmosphere and tension *AvP2* would've been the highest-scoring game ever. The multiplayer game and 3D engine brought the score down, but for scares nothing can touch this three-way fragfest.

PUB Vivendi DEV Monolith

PCZ ISSUE 110



MAX PAYNE

It's not big and it's not clever, but for style and content *Max Payne* receives top marks. The character animations and soon-to-be-copied-by-everyone Bullet Time mode are the real stars, it's just a shame it only lasts a few hours.

PUB Take 2 DEV Remedy

PCZ ISSUE 107



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

A mixed bag. Visually it might be at the top of the pile, but the single-player game has been completely eclipsed by *Medal Of Honor*. Forget that and head for the multiplayer action instead, where the game comes into its own.

PUB Activision DEV Gray Matter/Nerve

PCZ ISSUE 112



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Unreal Tournament's multiplayer mode is more than a match for *Quake III*, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. Single-player mode is a tad short, but it's still more of a challenge than most.

PUB Infogrames DEV Epic/Digital Extremes

PCZ ISSUE 81



QUAKE III ARENA

Still going strong with a constant stream of mods and add-ons, *Quake III* is probably the best game for pure deathmatch multiplayer, but in terms of numbers it's trounced online by *Half-Life* and *Counter-Strike*.

PUB Activision DEV id

PCZ ISSUE 87



NEW ENTRY JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

The first *Star Wars* game to be awarded a *PC Zone* Classic award since the original *Jedi Knight* back in 1997. This is more than just a simple FPS, it's frustrating, rewarding and extremely good fun. A new hope has come.

PUB Activision DEV Raven

PCZ ISSUE 115

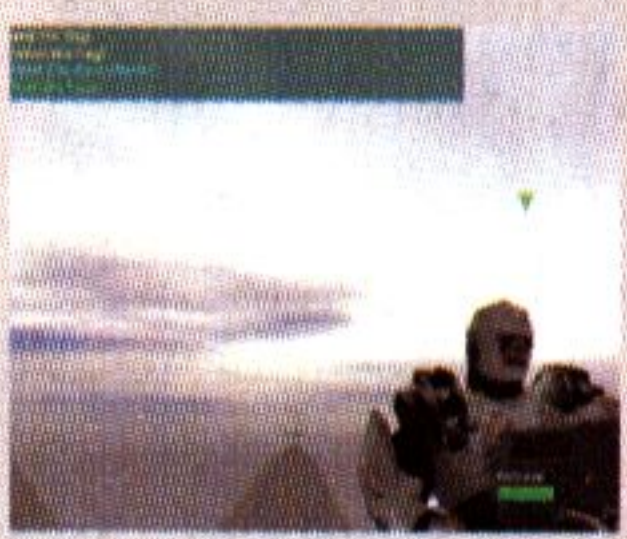


CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

This atmospheric shooter is one of the most unsettling we've seen and the superb graphics and sound will have you jumping like a little girl. A game that pushes the boundaries of narrative gameplay.

PUB EA DEV EALA

PCZ ISSUE 101



TRIBES 2

If you're after quality co-operative action in expansive outdoor environments with superb visuals and smooth play, there's no better place to go than online with *Tribes 2*. If you're not much of a team player then steer clear.

PUB Vivendi DEV Dynamix

PCZ ISSUE 103

STRATEGY

SHOGUN: WARLORDS



Take command of enormous armies, engage in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate generals and conquer your way through feudal Japan. This edition further improves the game's capable 3D engine, gives you greater customisation over your units and also lets you play as the Mongols. Copious in-game options never get in the way of the instant playability. *Shogun* will blow you away.

PUB EA DEV Creative Assembly

PCZ ISSUE 89



WARRIOR KINGS

A visually stunning and hugely ambitious RTS that melds the strategic diversity of *Battle Realms* with the huge 3D rolling landscapes of *Shogun*. With a compelling story to boot, no strategy fan should be without a copy.

PUB Microids DEV Black Cactus

PCZ ISSUE 114



COMMANDOS 2

There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more.

PUB Eidos DEV Pyro Studio

PCZ ISSUE 108



COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

There are 8000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement, a 3D landscape with real physics modelling and great graphics and sound make it truly absorbing. An essential purchase.

PUB CDV DEV GSC GameWorld

PCZ ISSUE 101



Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-er-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into.

PUB EON DEV Bitmap Brothers

PCZ ISSUE 101



ETHERLORDS

This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. The visuals and sound are stunning, the tactical variety truly staggering – fantastic stuff.

PUB JoWood DEV Nival Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 112



BATTLE REALMS

Emerging from the quagmire of all too similar RTS games this is a genuinely ground-breaking strategy game. It does have its flaws which include a tedious plot, but the great use of sound, visuals and gameplay shine through.

PUB Ubi Soft DEV Liquid Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 111

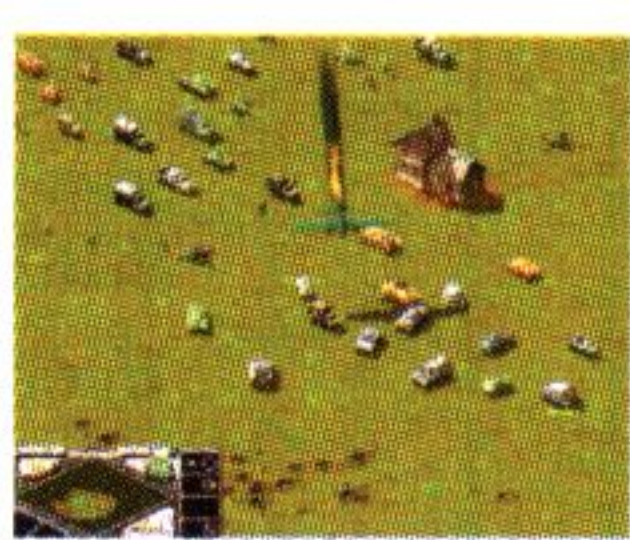


AGE OF EMPIRES II: GOLD EDITION

It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *Age of Empires II* the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. A great RTS.

PUB Microsoft DEV Ensemble Studios

PCZ ISSUE 84



SUDDEN STRIKE

Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling strategy title. Its large-scale battles, huge selection of units and superb interface make it a must for RTS fans.

PUB CDV DEV Fireglow

PCZ ISSUE 96



SHATTERED GALAXY

This hugely involving online game combines a monthly *EverQuest*-style subscription-based role-playing experience with massive *Total Annihilation*-influenced combat. Only available from the States, but well worth the price.

PUB www.sgalaxy.com DEV Nexon

PCZ ISSUE 108

Welcome to the all-new **PC ZONE A-List**, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers. Get in.

◀ **ROLE-PLAYING GAMES** ▶

DEUS EX



Warren Spector is one of the true visionaries of the computer game medium, and this is his opus. Combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming. The fascinating sci-fi plot and amazing attention to detail, combined with unparalleled player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is a landmark in gaming.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 93




PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorch of an RPG.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Black Isle Studio
PCZ ISSUE 87



DUNGEON SIEGE
Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Gas Powered Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



SYSTEM SHOCK 2
Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.
PUB EA **DEV** Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 80



DARK AGE OF CAMELOT
With some of the best graphics seen in an MMORPG, *Dark Age Of Camelot* creates an atmospheric, engaging and open-ended world. The scale of battles alone should ensure it remains above *EverQuest* for a good few months.
PUB Koch Media **DEV** Mythic Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 112



BALDUR'S GATE II
The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Bioware
PCZ ISSUE 96



THRONE OF DARKNESS
An enjoyable party-based strategic hack 'n' slash from the developers of *Diablo* sees you take command of seven samurai as they fight their way through feudal Japan. Not for everyone, granted, but worth a look.
PUB Vivendi **DEV** Click Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 96



NEW ENTRY FREEDOM FORCE
Control your own group of superheroes in this immersive and fully destructible comic book world. It may not be the most sophisticated and bearded of RPGs, but *Freedom Force* is unadulterated bubble-gum fun at its best.
PUB EA **DEV** Irrational Games
PCZ ISSUE 115



DIABLO II
The sequel to the definitive hack 'n' slash took all the qualities of the original into a massive world of beautifully simplistic yet compelling gameplay. With a huge online community and an excellent expansion, *DII* is as addictive as ever.
PUB VU Games **DEV** Blizzard
PCZ ISSUE 84




EVERQUEST
Probably the most notorious of all online RPGs, *EverQuest* has gone from strength to strength with a total of three expansion packs. A beautiful if repetitive game that has claimed the souls of thousands worldwide.
PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Verant
PCZ ISSUE 80

◀ **ACTION/ADVENTURE** ▶


GRIM FANDANGO




If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. The comic interaction between Manny and Glottis is a high watermark for scripting in games, while sublime graphics and laugh-out-loud humour ensure it's at the top of its genre. A word of warning though: it's bloody hard and if your mind doesn't work laterally you'll be playing it until the day you die.
PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 71




SOUL REAVER 2
While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre, with a compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Crystal Dynamics
PCZ ISSUE 111




DISCWORLD NOIR
Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and all the better for it in our opinion.
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Perfect Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 79




SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS
Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside *Soldier of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and combo system.
PUB Codemasters **DEV** Rebel Act Studios
PCZ ISSUE 98




THE NOMAD SOUL
Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless. *The Nomad Soul* is a huge intricate world populated by lap dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost pulls it off.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Quantic Dream
PCZ ISSUE 83



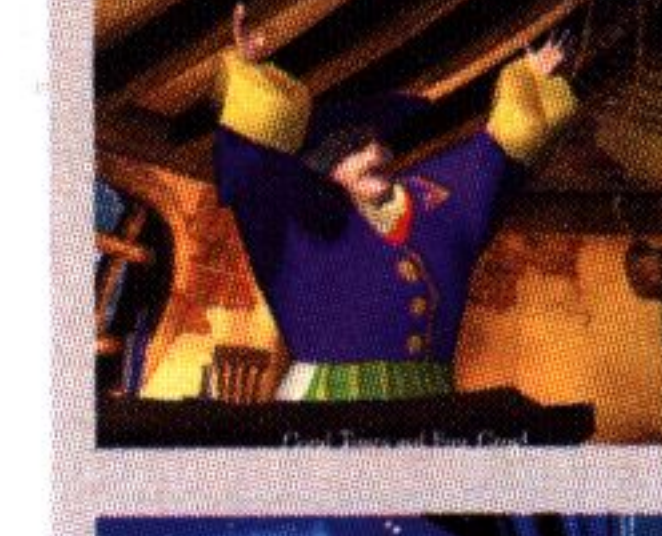
HITMAN: CODENAME 47
Reminiscent of *Leon* and *Day of the Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the excitement of carrying out a contract killing. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.
PUB Eidos **DEV** IO Interactive
PCZ ISSUE 98




PROJECT EDEN
Giving you control of four variously skilled operatives in a nightmarish future metropolis, *Eden* is at once predictable and innovative. The combat and AI may be dull, but the varied puzzles and raft of cool gadgetry make up for it.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Core Design
PCZ ISSUE 107



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE
LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, but with many of the adventure elements still in place. The result is surprisingly good, but not for traditionalists.
PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 84



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
One of the hardest things to do in a game is to make your audience laugh with you rather than at you, and *Escape From Monkey Island* is undoubtedly one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in recent years.
PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 98



METAL GEAR SOLID
Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses make it a thing of beauty.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Konami
PCZ ISSUE 96

◀ GOD GAMES ▶

BLACK & WHITE



Although it had its critics we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game both breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and lets you guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Overall we think it's pure genius in a box.

PUB EA **DEV** Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100



CIVILIZATION III

Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard *Civ* fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke...'

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Firaxis Games

PCZ ISSUE 111

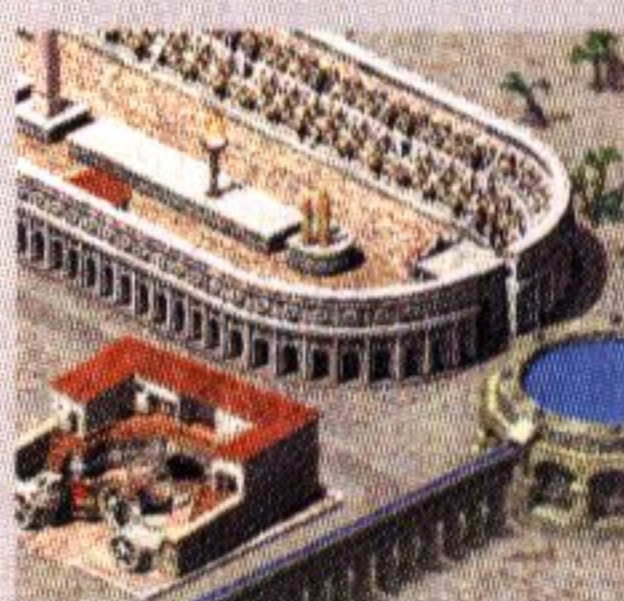


THE SIMS

Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthy long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, but you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucketload.

PUB EA **DEV** Maxis/EA

PCZ ISSUE 87

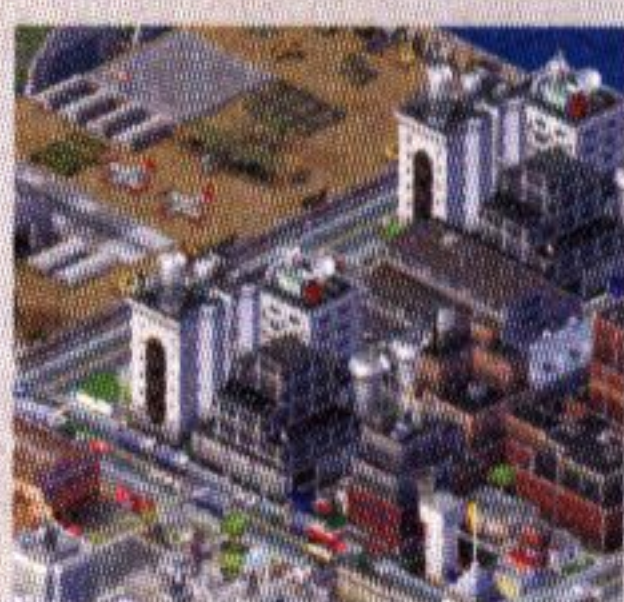


CAESAR III

Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.

PUB VU Games **DEV** Impressions

PCZ ISSUE 70

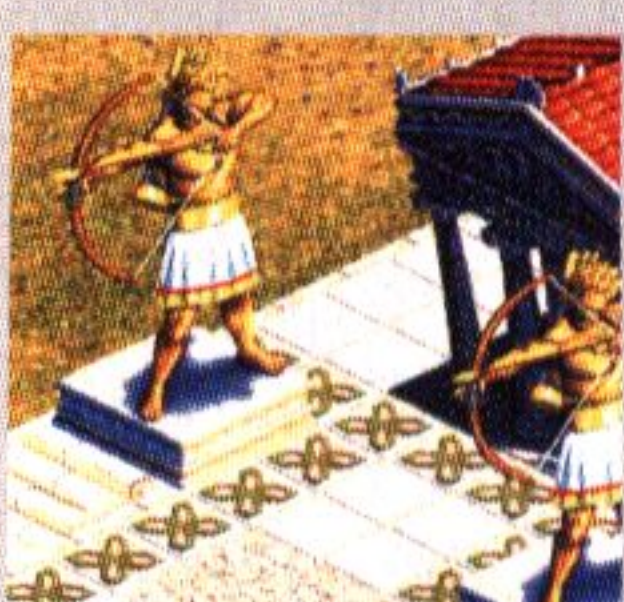


SIMCITY 3000

Ten years on, the offspring of the original building game *Sim City* still remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.

PUB EA **DEV** Maxis

PCZ ISSUE 74



ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS

Straight from the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. Despite its slightly cartoonish look *Zeus* is highly addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and an undeveloped combat system.

PUB VU Games **DEV** Impressions Games

PCZ ISSUE 97



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

Design and build your own theme park and then pack it full of the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up, while trying to keep the cash and the punters coming in. From rickety wooden dippers to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive. Be warned.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Chris Sawyer

PCZ ISSUE 75



MONOPOLY TYCOON

This mixture of the classic board game and a *Theme Park/SimCity*-style building sim is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.

PUB Infogrames **DEV** Deep Red

PCZ ISSUE 110

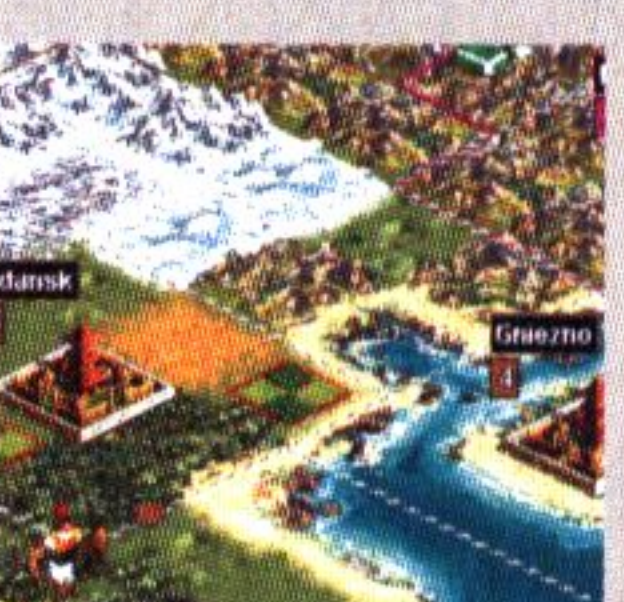


DUNGEON KEEPER 2

The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.

PUB EA **DEV** Bullfrog

PCZ ISSUE 79



CALL TO POWER II

It might not have the official endorsement, but *Call To Power II* is a spiritual successor to one of the greatest strategy games of all time, *Civilization II*. The gameplay is familiar but every element has been polished and the result is a hugely challenging and rewarding experience. Still well worth seeking out.

PUB Activision **DEV** Activision

PCZ ISSUE 98

◀ 3D ACTION / STRATEGY ▶

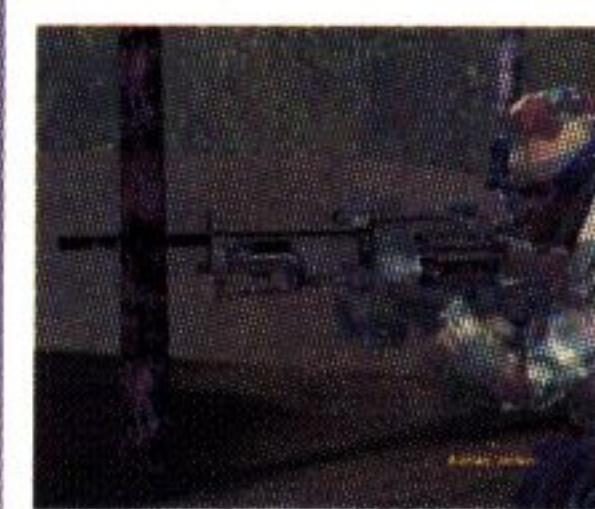
OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD



Now available with the tricky Red Hammer add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.

PUB Codemasters **DEV** Bohemia Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 104



GHOST RECON

A superb squad-based shooter, which masterfully combines tactics and action. The levels range from wide-open landscapes to claustrophobic city streets, in what is a stunning evocation of special forces warfare.

PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Red Storm Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 110



HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Looking old and with most of the original bugs intact, *Hidden & Dangerous* is still a great WWII game featuring some incredibly varied levels and a stirring soundtrack. Look out for the supposedly bug-free Deluxe release next issue.

PUB Take 2 **DEV** Illusion Softworks

PCZ ISSUE 79



HOSTILE WATERS

A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.

PUB Rage **DEV** Rage Software

PCZ ISSUE 101



GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes RTS, RPG, real-time and third-person-shooter combat elements. It's also rather funny and features near-naked women with blue skin.

PUB Interplay **DEV** Planet Moon Studios

PCZ ISSUE 95

◀ MULTIPLAYER MODS ▶

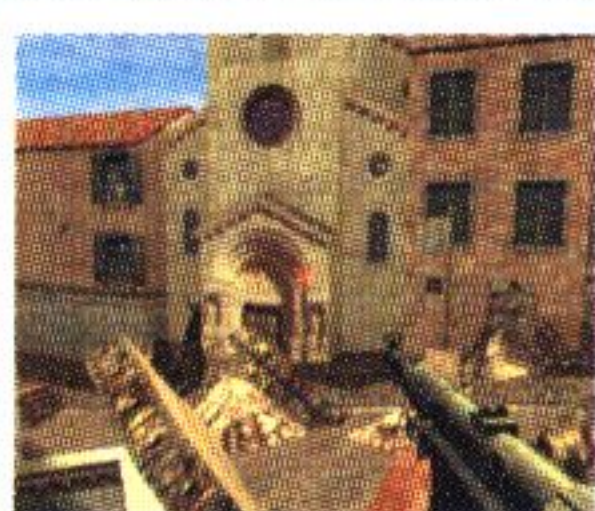
COUNTER-STRIKE



It's the game that has dominated the online world for more than a year now, and its popularity shows no sign of abating. With more servers in more countries than any other mod and a dedicated army of fans, *Counter-Strike* has proved that bedroom coding is alive and in better health than ever. Watch out for the exclusive review of the single-player conversion, *Condition Zero*, next month.

WEB www.counter-strike.net

PCZ ISSUE 109



DAY OF DEFEAT

Currently in its second beta, this WWII-themed game is being played by more people online than both *Medal Of Honor* and *Wolfenstein*. It's atmospheric, highly realistic and superbly designed.

WEB www.dayofdefeatmod.com

PCZ ISSUE 115



TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

A great squad-based action game with nine classes, a wide variety of weaponry and many map variations. The action focuses on infiltrating enemy bases, and the frantic gameplay requires more manual dexterity than most.

WEB <http://www.planethalflife.com/tfc>

PCZ ISSUE 109

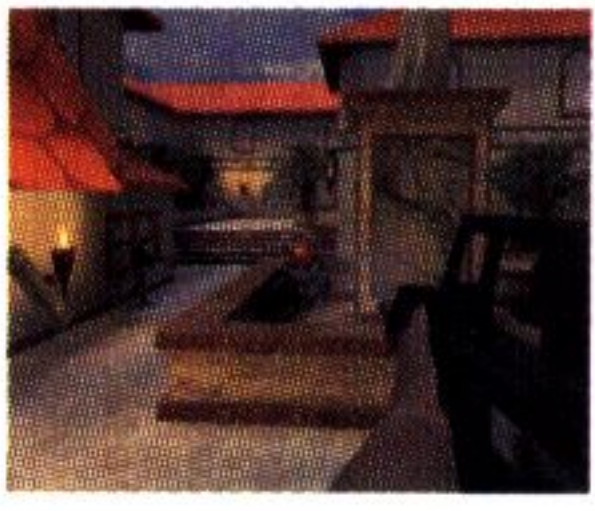


STRIKE FORCE

Hot on the heels of *Counter-Strike* comes this superb total conversion mod for *Unreal Tournament*. It boasts outstanding maps and attention to detail, including heartbeat monitors that measure stress and infrared laser dot aiming.

WEB www.strikeforcecenter.com

PCZ ISSUE 109



URBAN TERROR

Realism mods tend to be thinner on the ground for *Quake III*, perhaps because of the cartoon-like engine, but this mod does a great job of utilising the strategy of *Counter-Strike* with the pure blast 'em up gameplay of *Quake III*.

WEB www.urbanterror.net

PCZ ISSUE 109

◀ FLIGHT SIMS ▶

IL-2 STURMOVIK



Combining incredible atmosphere, sound and visuals with possibly the most realistic flight model to date, *IL-2* puts you behind the flight stick of a number of stunningly reproduced WWII combat planes. The attention to detail is breathtaking and the easy-to-use editor allows endless months of replayability. A must-have for any real combat flight sim fanatic.
PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** 1C: Madox Games

PCZ ISSUE 110



MS FLIGHT SIM 2002

With more polish than previous versions, this professional edition offers players more planes, extra flight loggings and improved graphics. It might not be able to teach you how to fly, but it's the closest you'll get without paying for lessons.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** BAO

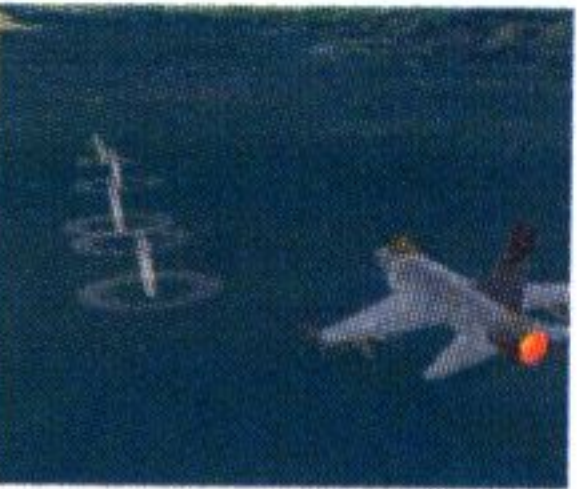
PCZ ISSUE 111



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually feel 'right'. Tally ho!
PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Rowan Software

PCZ ISSUE 103



FALCON 4

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Microprose

PCZ ISSUE 72



B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH

B-17 reproduces the experience of piloting a World War II bomber. Just about everything is covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks everywhere.
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Wayward Simulations

PCZ ISSUE 96

◀ SPORT ▶

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 01/02



Another year, another update and yet another improvement on the greatest sports management game of all time, one which will literally consume your life. New features this time around include masked attributes (forcing you to scout for talent), updated team and player stats, and all of the new rules and regulations imposed by FIFA for the new season. Pure genius.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Sports Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 108



VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, is its truly sublime multiplayer options.
PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Rowan Software

PCZ ISSUE 114



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Another console game that has stormed its way to success on the PC. The speed, balance and feel of the game are uncannily realistic, while the diversity of moves, combos and circuits will keep you playing for months on end.
PUB Activision **DEV** Neversoft Entertainment

PCZ ISSUE 98



VIRTUAL POOL 3

Easily the best cue-based game around, *VP3* features some near perfect physics and excellent graphics. The career and multiplayer modes are highly entertaining, and a superb tutorial will have you clearing up in no time.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Celeris

PCZ ISSUE 99



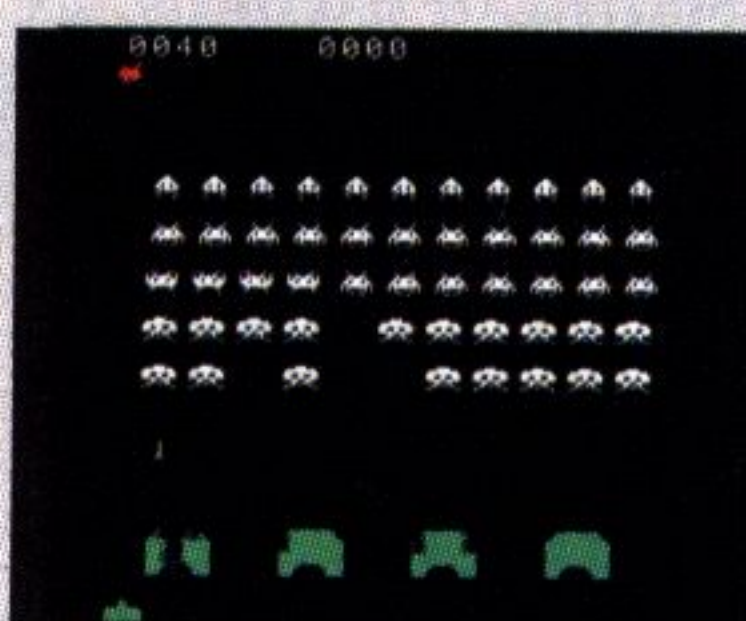
FIFA 2002

Still the best PC football game despite some irksome flaws, this graphically improved update introduces nuances such as through-ball and one-two options which provide greater variation but less passing accuracy.
PUB Electronic Arts **DEV** EA Sports

PCZ ISSUE 110

◀ ALL-TIME CLASSICS ▶

FOLLOWING MONTHS OF CONTEMPLATION, STEVE HILL LISTS THE TEN GAMES THAT HAVE EATEN UP THE MOST TIME OVER THE YEARS



SPACE INVADERS (ARCADE)

Fifty pence dinner money meant a 10p bag of chips and four goes on a stand-up cabinet in the back room of a sports shop. The school bully would persistently offer to take your last man on the promise of winning you an extra life, some fairly flawed logic delivered with thinly veiled menace. I hope he's dead.



MANIC MINER (ZX SPECTRUM)

Surrealist pixel-perfect platform genius from Matthew Smith, one of the first game developers anyone had ever heard of. Absolutely rock hard, the time I completed five and a half 'laps' of the 20 levels is still spoken of in reverential tones in our house. I eventually had to retire with distorted vision and fatigue.



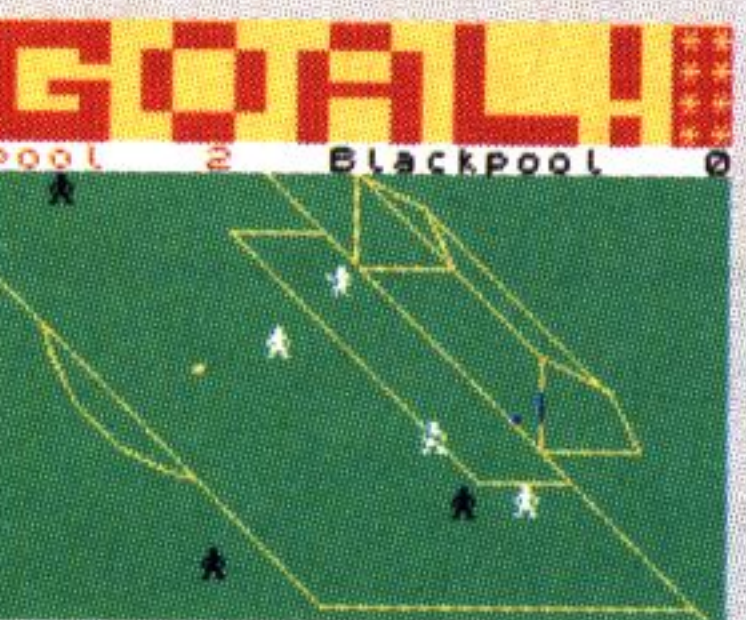
JET SET WILLY (ZX SPECTRUM)

At the time, this was not so much a game as a portal into another universe. If *Manic Miner* was *Revolver*, then this was *The White Album*, a sprawling hallucinogenic vision that could take over your life. Bugged to f**k, mind you. And I stole the colour-coded anti-piracy inlay card from Woolworths. It's all anarchy.



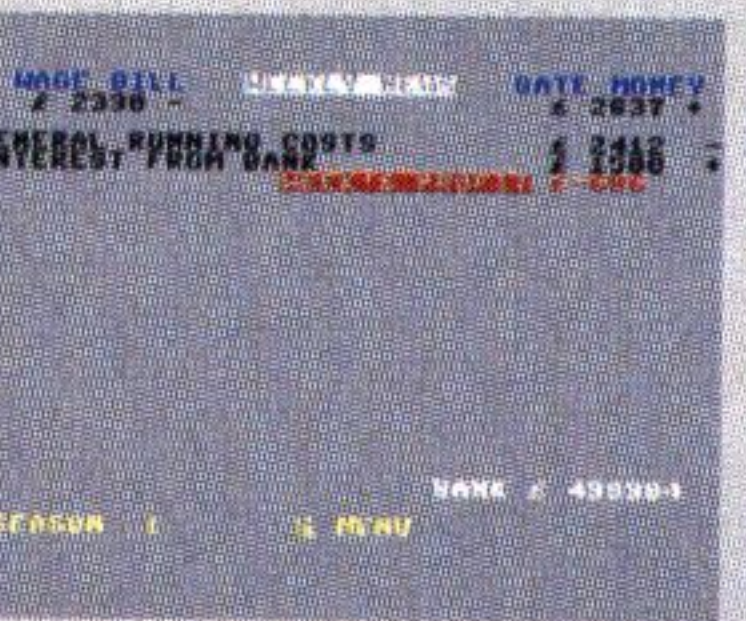
MATCHDAY (ZX SPECTRUM)

Despite the perennial finger-touching issue in two-player mode, this was a breakthrough football game, and I can clearly remember thinking that things surely couldn't get any better. Many years later, its creator Jon Ritman visited my house and accidentally broke a chair. Funny how things turn out.



FOOTBALL MANAGER (ZX SPECTRUM)

My first experience of management coincided with a burgeoning obsession with Chester City FC, and saw me overly enthused at the sight of black-and-white stick men kicking a square ball into goals that were a good 12 times the height of the players. Programmer Kevin Toms never lived down the Readers' Wives scandal.



FOOTBALL DIRECTOR (ZX SPECTRUM)

Even more hardcore, this eschewed graphical highlights in favour of sub-Teletext goal flashes. Costing a mammoth £9.95, I surreptitiously taped it off my brother, a cruel twist being that my bootleg copy was the only one that worked. Early signs of sickness were evident as I regularly played through to 7am.



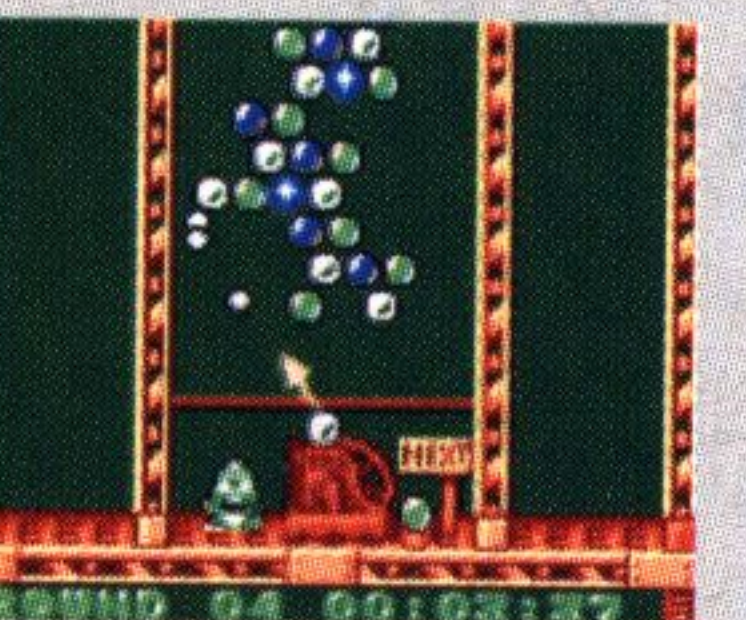
SENSIBLE SOCCER (AMIGA/PC)

The game that rekindled my interest in games, thanks to an Amiga-owning drug-dealing flatmate in the final year of university. It may have decimated my education but inadvertently helped launch my 'career', the first year and a half of which were largely spent playing *Sensible World of Soccer* against Keith Pullin. SWOS on!



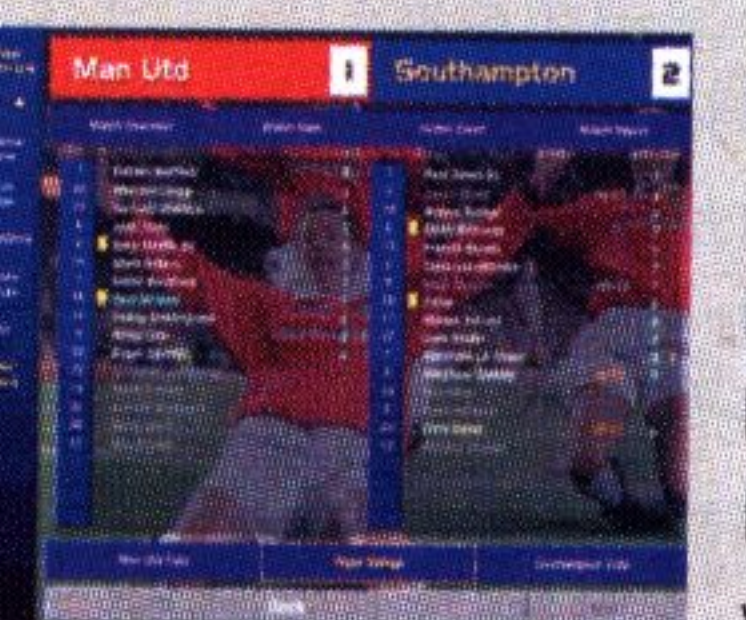
ISS (SNES/N64/PSX/PS2)

From the Super Nintendo onwards, Konami's *International Superstar Soccer* titles have consistently captured the passion and the glory of the world's greatest sport. It looks like football, it plays like football, it feels like football. Light years ahead of the competition, the PS2 currently hosts the impeccable *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Accept no substitute.



PUZZLE BOBBLE MINI (NEO GEO POCKET)

I spend thousands of pounds a year on exotic holidays in remote locations, and then spend a huge proportion of them staring at a 2.6in square screen while firing coloured balls into each other. As, amazingly, does my girlfriend, who regularly tops the high score chart. From now on, we're going to Rhyl.



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER (PC)

Decades have come and gone, and I'm still trying to forge Chester City into a competitive outfit. I didn't actually touch this until *CM3*, but have been making up for it ever since. Quite simply the most addictive thing I've ever tried, my current saved game stands at almost seven days. I've wasted my life.

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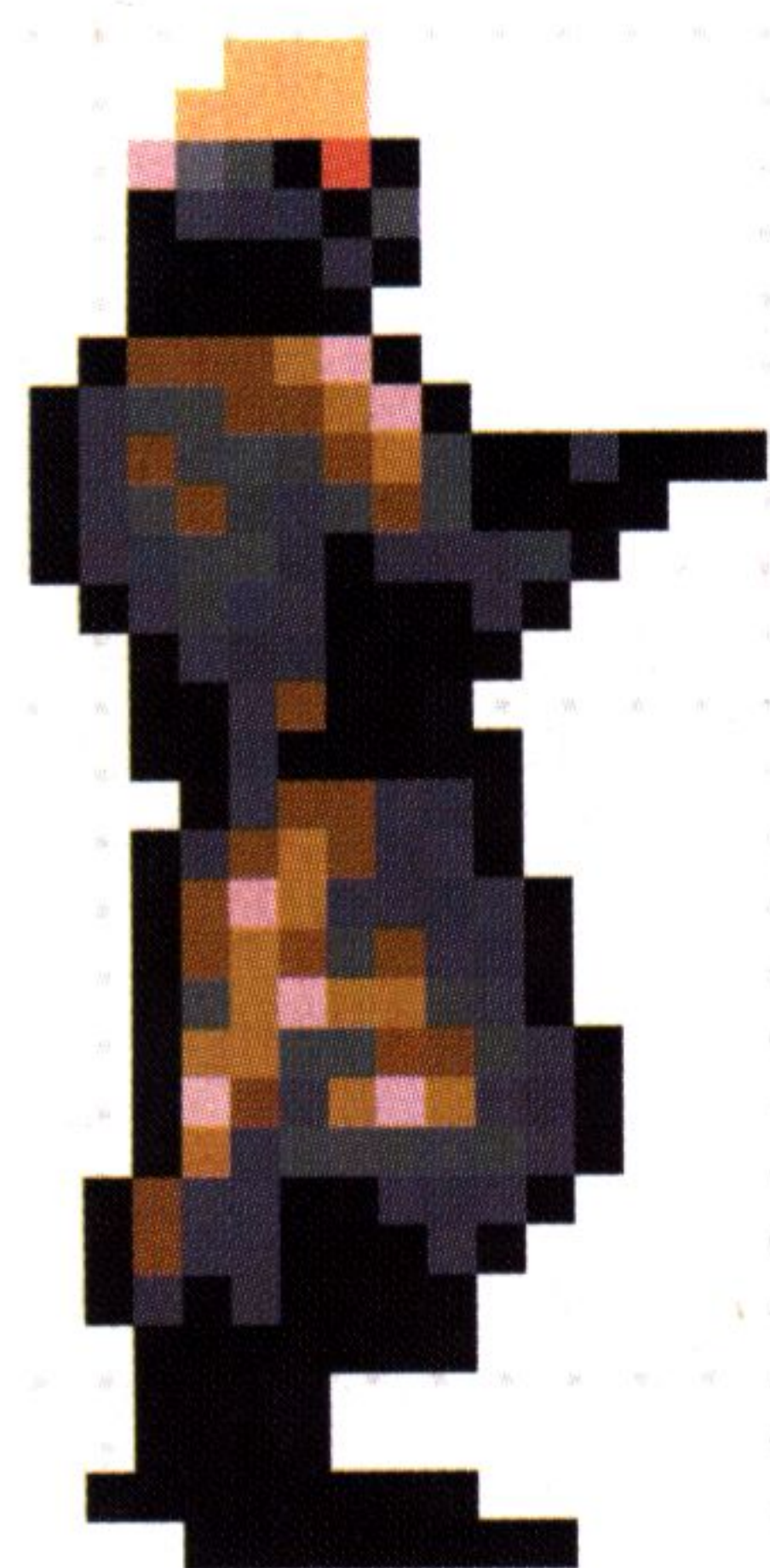
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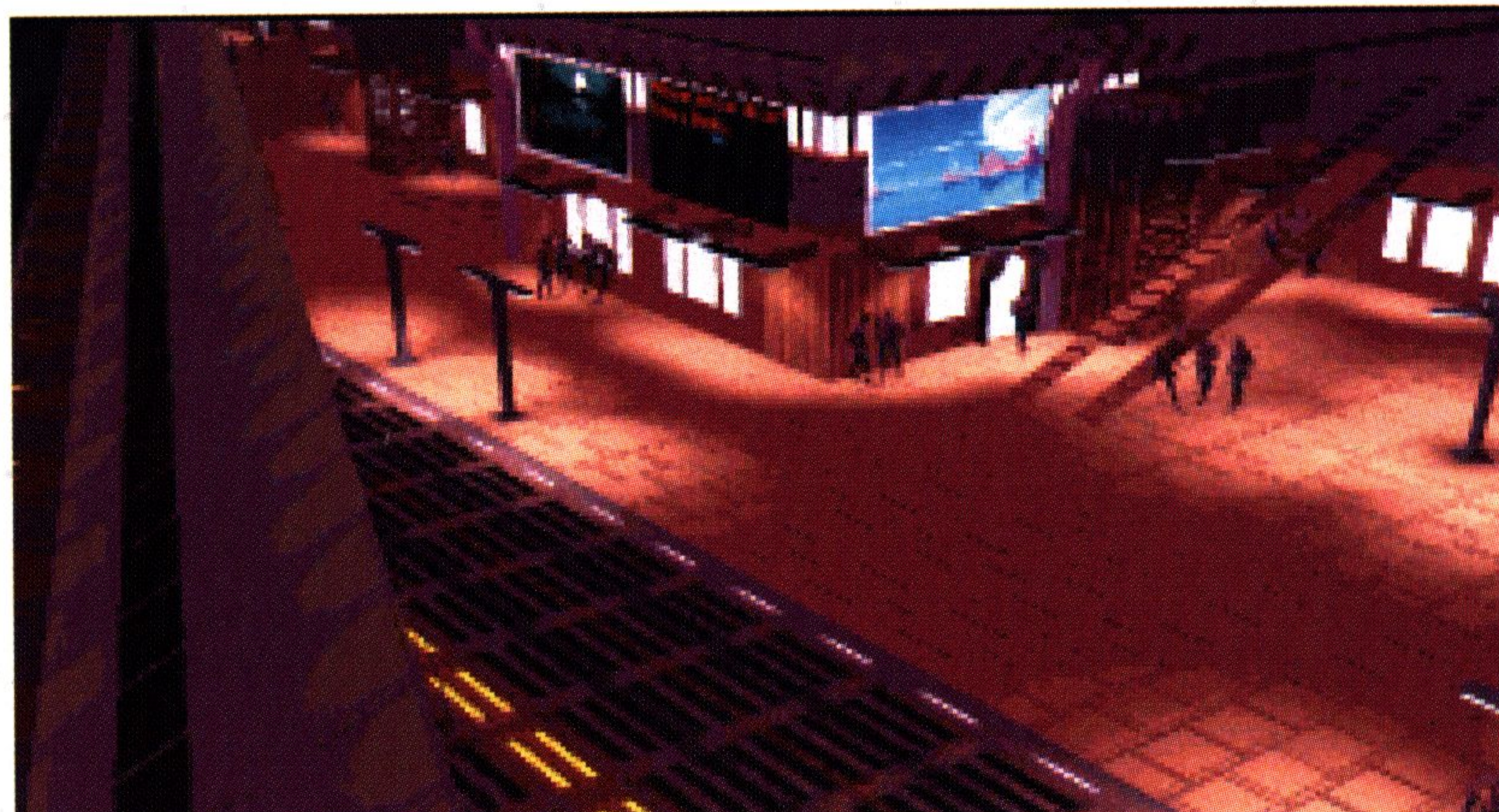
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RETRO ZONE



“The other sticking point was the use of drugs”



A peaceful little town. Not for long.

SYNDICATE

Bullfrog does the cyberpunk thing, and does it bloody well

LONG BEFORE Columbine marred the image of gun-toting trench coat wearers, and even longer before Keanu and co rehabilitated them in *The Matrix*, Bullfrog was letting the burgeoning PC games fraternity don the natty threads of violent maniacs in *Syndicate*.

The somewhat sinister concept had you implanting control chips in people's necks then using them to run around killing the assets of rival corporation. How you did it was up to you. A stealthy sniper rifle from half a block away or a

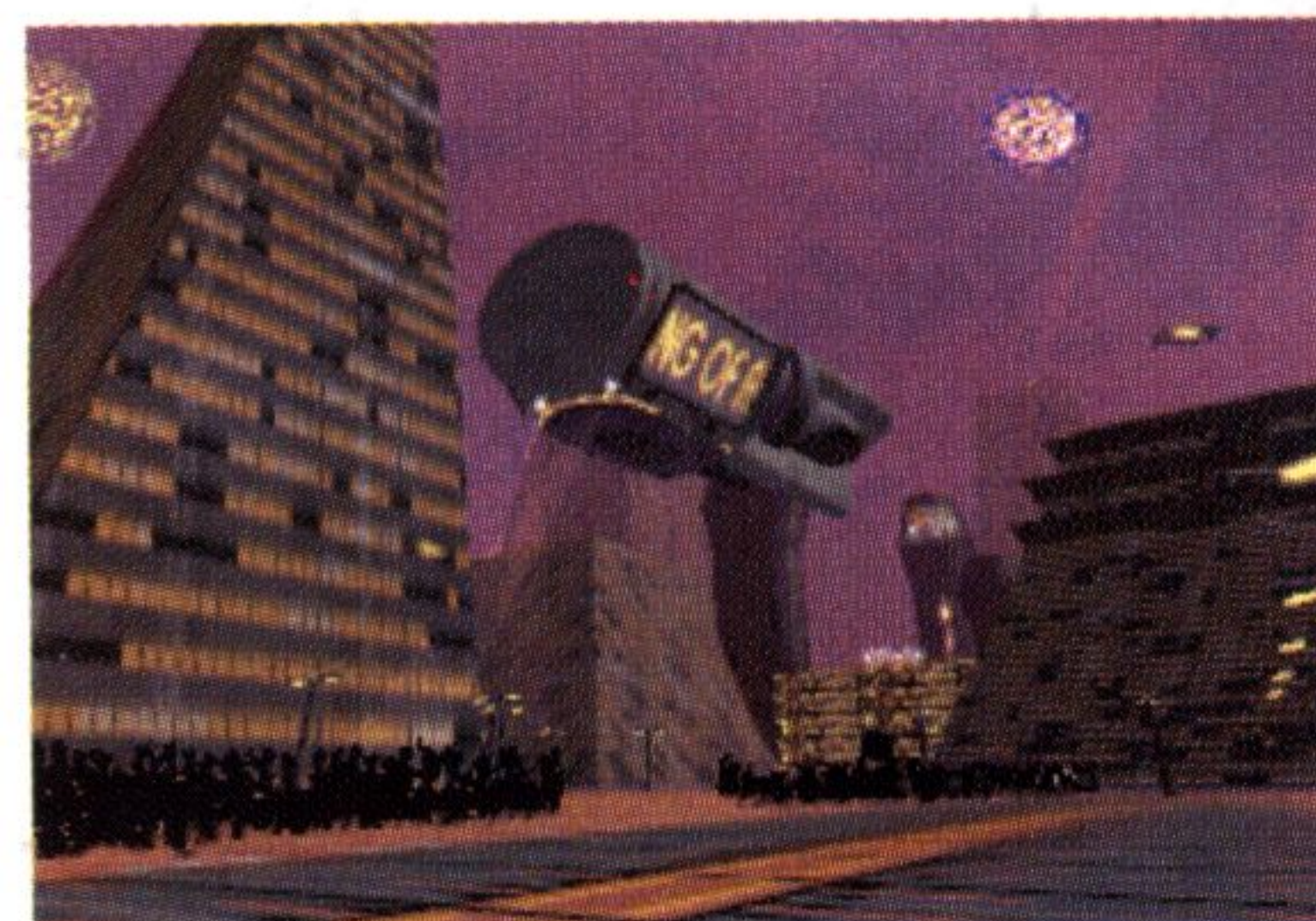
time bomb through the front door and an almighty (and very messy) explosion.

Outrage was guaranteed both through the bloody nature of the graphics (despite their miniscule on-screen size) and the amoral nature of the gameplay. Civilians roamed each level but had little function other than as human shields when the bullets started flying.

The other sticking point was the use of drugs. Should your agents need to be, ahem, modified, you could inject them with various mood-altering substances.

OK, it was little more than adrenaline but since you could overdose and make them go on rampaging killing sprees it was deemed a little, shall we say, near the knuckle. Besides, this was the early '90s and we were all a little more hysterical about such things then.

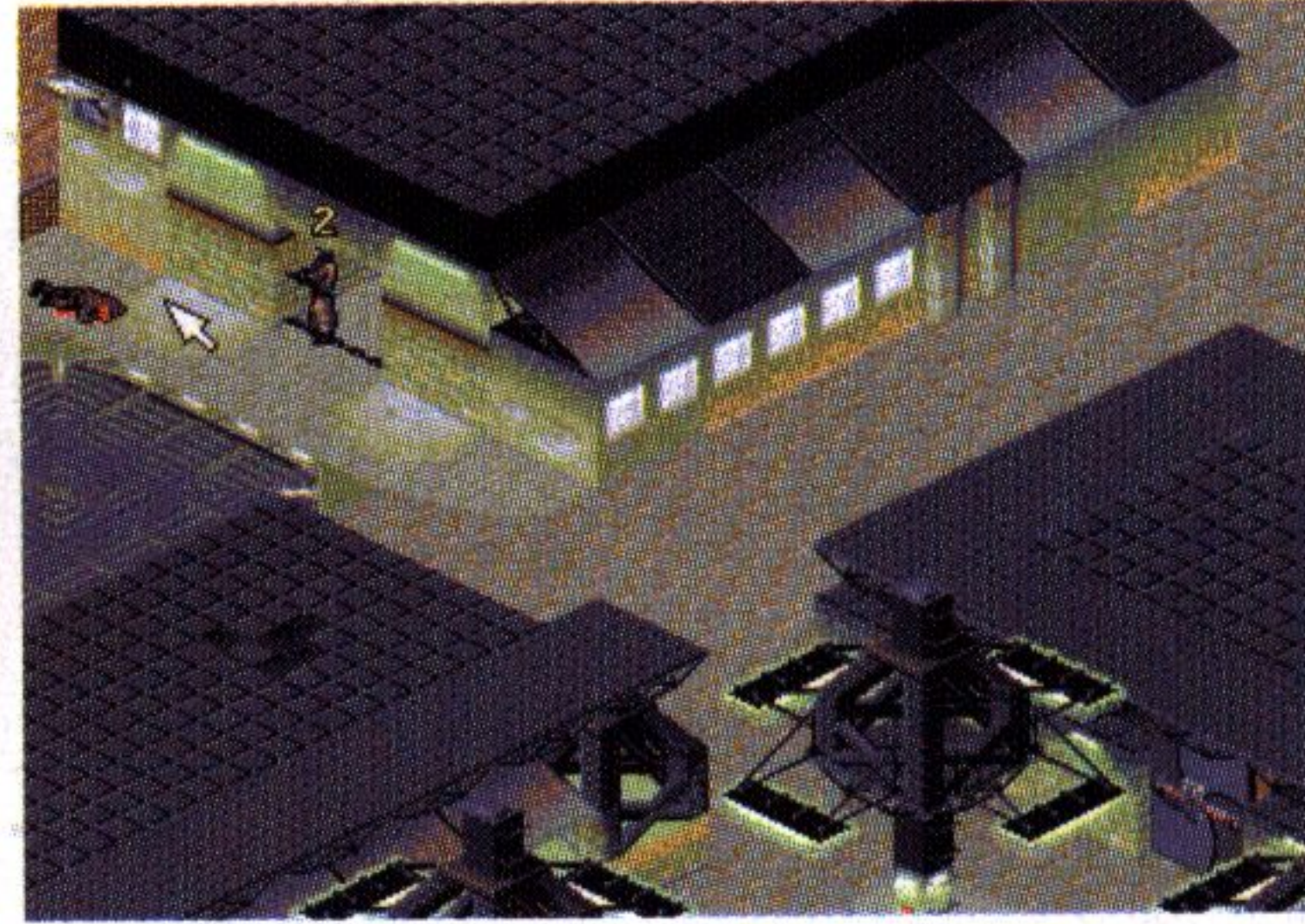
Naturally, all this gunplay and amoral activity meant that *Syndicate* was an absolute blast to play. It stormed the charts and three years later led to an equally popular sequel. Death and destruction, nothing beats it.



Death from above.



Blood on the streets.



Wiping out the Xbox plants?

NEWS

GAMING NEWS FROM AUGUST 1993

- Apple returns with the Newton MessagePad. The handheld organiser is supposed to recognise actual handwriting and sells 50,000 within ten weeks. Or, to put it the Newton way, 'sails B0000 wtltn tin wakes'. It doesn't last long.
- Nintendo announces Project Reality – the console latterly known as the N64. The announcement comes with several highly-rendered Silicon Graphic produced routines that wouldn't even be capable by today's standards.
- Meanwhile, Atari unveils its own killer console – the 64-bit Jaguar – at the CES show in Chicago. It's released at the end of that year. Obscurity quickly beckons.
- *Super Mario Bros.* (the film) is released. Whoops.

THE BEST OF THE REST →



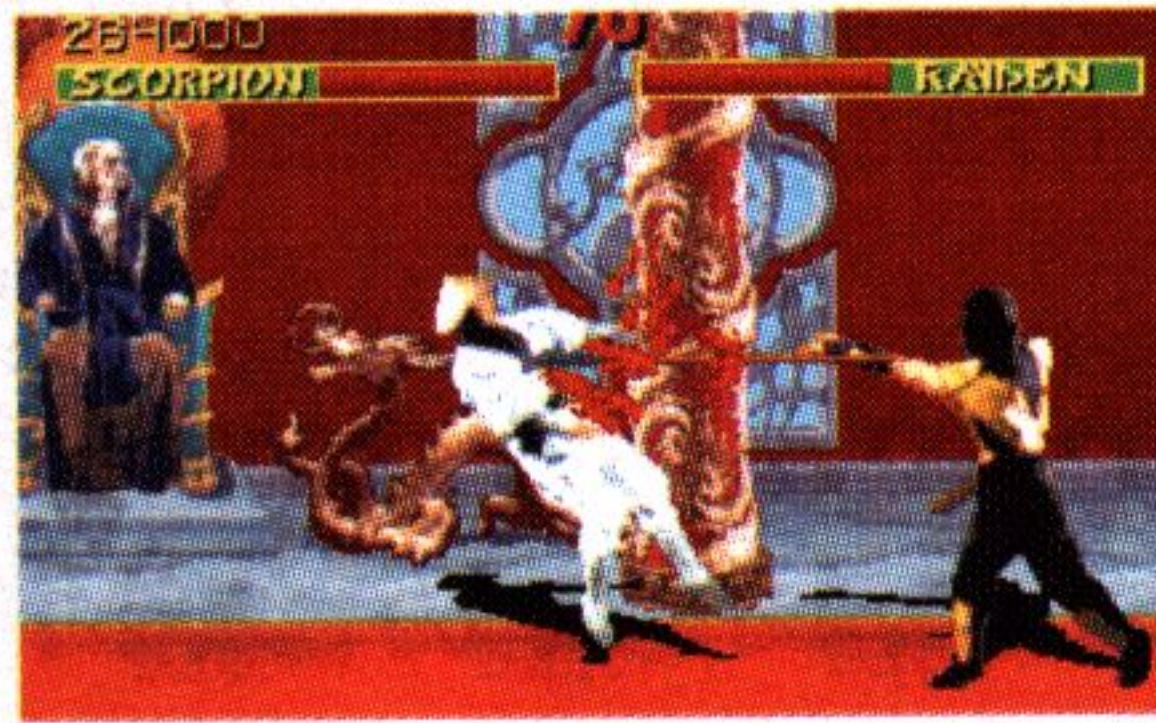
Tornado (PC)

The hardcore UK flight sim started here. Digital Integration was no stranger to decent flight sims, but this topped the lot. A 330-page manual that was required reading, mission planners that meant co-ordinating massive strike forces and just about every acronym ever invented finding their way into the cockpit. Hard.



The 7th Guest (PC)

The first of the interminable deluge of interactive movies that plagued the '90s. Ostensibly a ghost story, set in the abandoned house of the insane toy maker Henry Stauf. In actuality a poor collection of parlour games and logic puzzle tied together with grainy video clips. The only scary part was the price – £70.



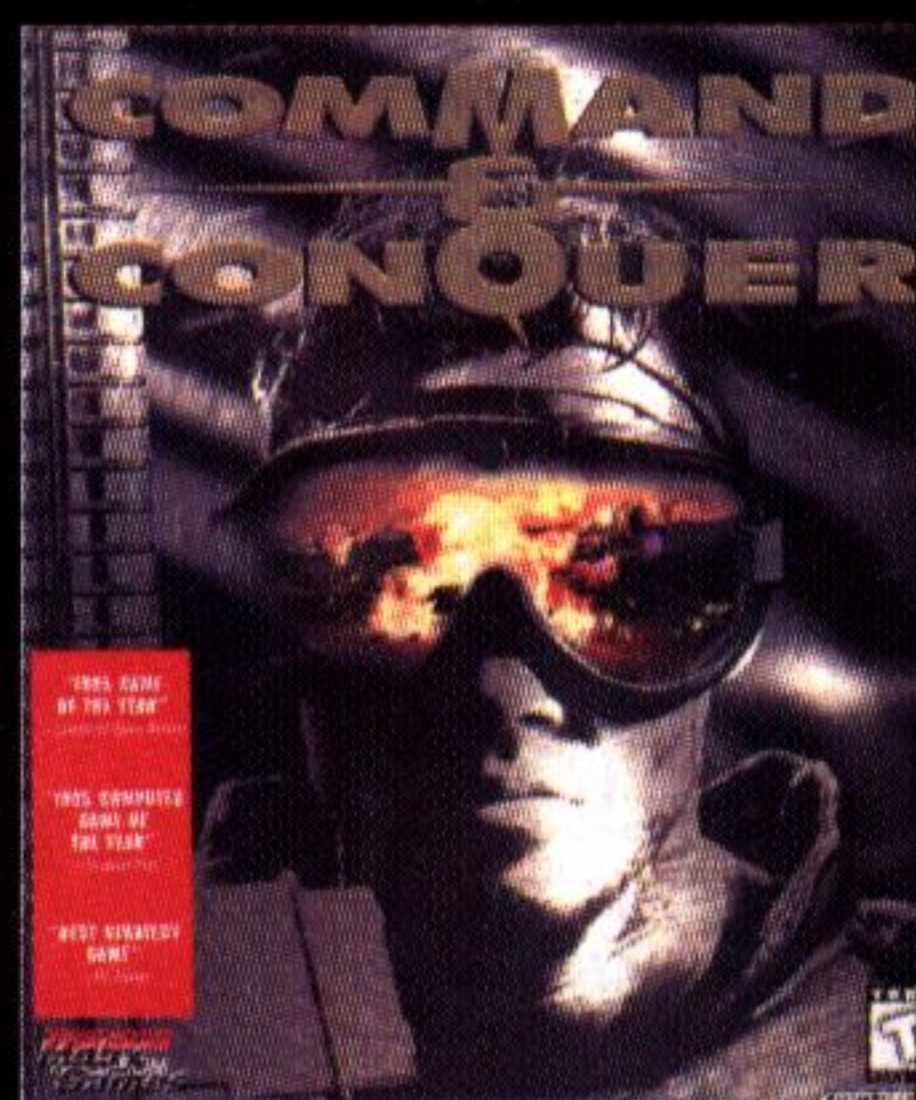
Mortal Kombat

(Practically every platform)
Under the mistaken assumption that what made beat 'em ups great was the blood and gore rather than the intricate fighting dynamic, Acclaim released the home versions of the decapitation sim. Nintendo was under no illusions though, and made them take all the blood and fatalities out of the SNES version.



Flashback

(Atari ST/Amiga/PC)
Back then, French games were considered something pretty special, especially those from Delphine. *Flashback* was a futuristic platform romp that boasted amazing animation routines and a gripping storyline. It also had a hero called Conrad, but that's the French for you. Think of it like *Prince Of Persia* with a gun.



GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

COMMAND & CONQUER

Continuing our series of features spotlighting classic games that changed the face of gaming forever, **Paul Mallinson** goes back in time to look at the spectacular *Command & Conquer* from Westwood Studios

GAME Command & Conquer

DEVELOPER Westwood Studios

RELEASED July 1995

INFLUENCED Not only the entire real-time strategy genre, but games that aspire to be realistic and fun

WE'RE BACK in 1995, it's The United Nations' Year Of Tolerance, John Major is Prime Minister for the fifth year, The Gulf War is over, Chechnya is at war for a second year, Everton beat Man Utd in the FA Cup and the PC gaming world is heralding a new messiah on the block yet again – Westwood Studios' amazing real-time strategy (RTS) game *Command & Conquer*. A game that set the standard for point-and-click 'toy soldier' style strategy games, and forever lived on in the spirit of other RTS classics that followed it.

Before *Command & Conquer* the PC had comfortably played host to numerous turn-based strategy games. Mostly they were interface-heavy clunkers with overhead maps and the kind of titchy graphics that would make your eyes screw up. Even worse – they were invariably graced with fantasy or ultra-real war settings and involved hex maps, which made them even more off-putting. The PC needed something hard and refreshing, like an unexpected shag at a party, to get the genre going again.

It wasn't actually the original *Command & Conquer* that

gave birth to the resource management gameplay concept that defined the series – it was a little-known sequel called *Dune 2*, developed for the Sega Megadrive and converted to other formats by Westwood in 1993.

blueprint for real-time strategy, one that laid the foundations for C&C – as *Wolfenstein* was to *Doom*, so was *Dune 2* to C&C. Joe Bostic, designer and programmer on *Dune 2* and

THE POLITICAL CLIMATE

Command & Conquer came next. Westwood's development fraternity knew they were making magic with *Dune 2*, but wanted to learn from previous mistakes and create something even better. Thus C&C development began in earnest early in 1993.

"*Command & Conquer* was originally a fantasy game with wizards and warriors," reveals Louis Castle, co-founder of Westwood Studios, "but Brett [Sperry – co-founder of Westwood] felt strongly that a contemporary war environment would be more accessible for most people so the game moved into 'modern war' and the C&C fiction began to take shape."

By 1994 the world was a politically gloomy place to live. The Gulf War had ended, though not satisfactorily so and Saddam Hussein remained in power. Did this climate affect the game's design?

C&C's lead designer Erik Yeo thinks so.

"Absolutely. The decision to go in the direction we did had already been made, but everything that went on in the world just gave us more and more ideas."

Louis Castle agrees: "War was in the news and the threat of terrorism was on everyone's mind."

That definitely had an effect on the fictional world of C&C, though a 'parallel universe' was created to avoid dealing with the sobering issues of a real war."

Joe Bostic also thinks so: "The Gulf War ultimately played a large part in moving away from the initial fantasy direction and toward modern sci-fi."

So the game began to take shape and new ideas came thick and fast. The introduction of 'Tiberium' as the mined resource for building and expanding replaced the 'spice' from *Dune 2*.

"The idea for Tiberium," comments Bostic, "was inspired by the science fiction B-movie *Monolith Monsters* – a must-see movie, in my opinion." On top



Dune 2: Battle

For Arrakis, to give the game its full UK title, was a hit, though didn't set the world on fire. It had unit-based combat, real-time strategy, resource management (you'd mine 'spice' to create new assets) and the now famous isometric tiled viewpoint. Most strategy fans loved *Dune 2* and realised it had special addictive qualities. Strictly speaking it was the

lead programmer and original concept on *Command & Conquer*, expands on this: "I think the appeal was the combination of plausible sci-fi military units melded with the real-time aspects of *Populous* with a light splash of the unit progression found in *Civilization*," he says. "We weren't exactly sure it would work at first, but when we had so much fun playing it in the office, we knew we were on to something." And indeed they were.



GDI faced NOD in a good vs evil battle.

of that, semi-realistic landscapes and military vehicles were introduced instead of the pointy, floaty ships of *Dune 2*.

"It was a good decision since modern vehicles are much more recognisable and real," adds Bostic.

Development of the first C&C was speedy, focused and fun. As Bostic says: "It was so much fun that I would sometimes marvel that I actually got paid as well... I recall one time when we were secretly coding the dinosaur levels into the game (management didn't know we were doing it) and they accidentally popped up during a test when management was in the room. We had to do some fast explaining, but the cat was out of the bag. At first they were upset, but decided to let us 'have our fun' and the missions stayed in the game."

Louis Castle says, though, that it wasn't really a "working party" style atmosphere in the office and that because everyone was working on numerous titles



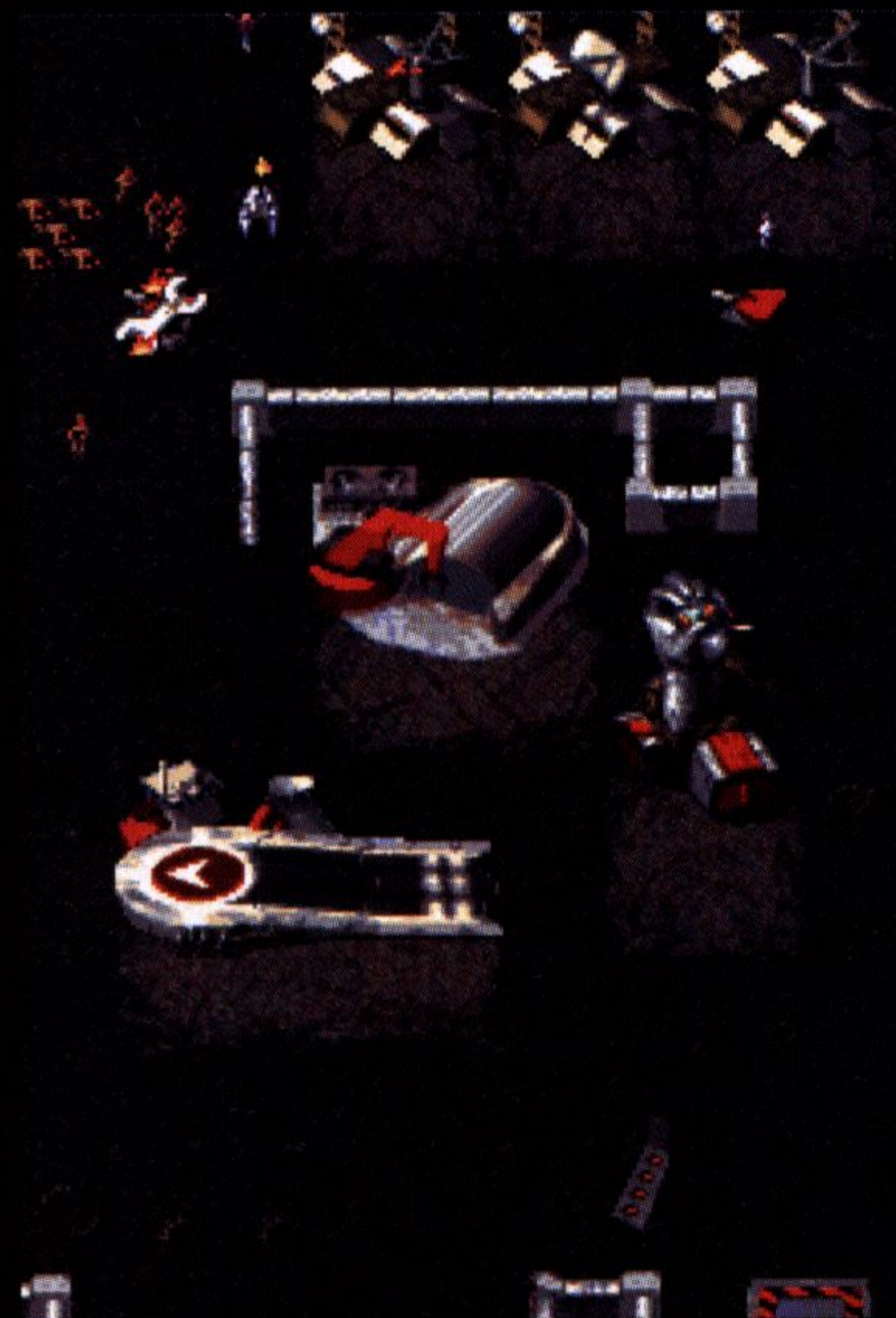
Build armies and rush the enemy base.

at once it didn't offer much time to look back and celebrate.

Erik Yeo goes for the middle ground: "It was generally quiet and mostly professional," he says, "but we always had fun. We were making games for a living, so there was always a fun side to everything."

WHY SO SPECIAL?

The 'fun' sentiment came across in early builds of the game. Many early beta testers found themselves entwined in the *Command & Conquer* universe within a few hours of playing, and it suddenly began to sink in at Westwood



Prudent resource management was essential for victory.



that it had a potential classic on its hands.

Joe Bostic remembers this part of development fondly: "It was sometimes difficult to get the playtest department to test," he laughs. "I would often find them starting a campaign to test one element of the game, and before you knew it they got carried away and were playing for fun. In a way, this is a compliment to the game, so I wasn't too upset."

Erik Yeo also noted the excitement in Westwood's playtesters at the time: "I overheard the QA guys excitedly swapping war stories from multiplayer sessions once," Yeo enthuses, "and I also noticed they were spending their

free time playing a game that was supposed to be work, which was encouraging."

Louis Castle suggests that this rubbed-off on C&C's coding team and drove them to previously unseen levels of commitment and passion in their search for the best game possible.

But what was it that made the game so special? Why did the playtesters love it so much?

"It was the fact that you could move around troops and tanks in a virtual sand-box that harkened back to the days of playing with toy soldiers," says Joe Bostic. "Also the fact that you could squish guys with your tanks..."

Erik Yeo and Louis Castle have their theories as well: "The resource model and base management were important but never overbearing or impossible to learn," claims Yeo. "Multiplayer was always interesting because it could last ten minutes or several hours and playing real people is always more interesting than AI. I think the solo-play mission



Strategy? In real time? Unheard of.

design and pacing was good enough to keep people up late."

"I have always been amazed with the loss of time experienced by the player," says Castle. "The realisation that you've been playing for hours and it felt like minutes. Plus, the basic mechanics of balancing creation, defence and offence in a struggle over limited resources."

PHENOMENON

When the game was finished and the reviews came in, Westwood was chuffed with the response. Most critics loved it, despite a few minor niggles, and magazine covers and awards came thick

PROFILES

We spoke to these key members of the *Command & Conquer* development team and found out what they've been up to...



NAME Erik Yeo
FIRST GAME *Terminator* for the Sega Mega CD
ROLE ON C&C Lead designer
CURRENTLY Finishing *Legion* and *Defender* for the PS2 for 7 Studios



NAME Joe Bostic
FIRST GAME *Dragon Strike* for the Amiga
ROLE ON C&C Lead programmer and original concept
CURRENTLY Working on the next step of RTS (r)evolution



NAME Louis Castle
FIRST GAME *Temple Of Apshai* trilogy for the Mac
ROLE ON C&C Executive producer and co-founder of Westwood
CURRENTLY Working on the next C&C game at Westwood



would be subsequent battles for hours on end."

Erik Yeo also has an honest view of the multiplayer magic: "I think there is something special about interacting with other people from anywhere in the world," he says "and then hitting them with tanks and nuclear weapons! I bet that gives me away as American, doesn't it?" Yes it does, Erik.

15 MILLION SOLD WORLDWIDE

Command & Conquer went on to become a legend – with 3 million units of the original game sold worldwide, and 15 million of the franchise – and lives on to this day in the likes of *C&C Renegade*; the forthcoming *C&C Generals*; and in hundreds of other strategy games that have 'lifted' mechanics straight

was going to please fans from that moment on. But where *C&C* really excelled was in an aspect of the game that required real human intelligence to work properly – not AI – and that was multiplayer. The fact that up to four people could play a game simultaneously was fairly revolutionary back in the DOS days of 1995, and really caught the imagination of the public, as Louis Castle points out.

"*C&C* actually had multiplayer, which was extraordinary in itself. Many games did not consider the potential of connecting real people together to play a game. A real-time strategy game seemed nearly impossible at the time because of the very slow connection speeds of computers. Beyond that *C&C* has always tried to be a sport activity where both players play with a fixed set of rules but this sport requires brains as well as fast reflexes." But what made *C&C* multiplayer so addictive and special?

"The multiplayer aspect of *C&C* was special," says Joe Bostic, "because you could battle your friends and snatch victory from the jaws of defeat with clever gameplay – in a world that was exciting and fun. I found that even if I lost, I would learn new strategies and tactics that would often prove successful in subsequent battles. Naturally there

strategy genre. As big as the game felt we had no idea it would become the beginning of the largest market segment of PC games."

As previously touched upon, *C&C* was not without its problems. In early versions units and troops would take wayward routes to their destinations, leading to a "mini backlash" from fans after the initial frenzy calmed down.

"Find-path logic was always a problem," admits Joe Bostic, "especially in dealing with bridges and traffic jams. That said: complaining about AI and game imbalance has been directed at every RTS game since *Command & Conquer* first came out. We made only a couple of minor balance adjustments in the patch, but otherwise were pleased with how the gameplay and balance turned out."

It's ironic, *C&C* raised standards so much, that nothing less than perfect AI

and fast. But did the developers realise at the time how big the *Command & Conquer* name would become?

"No, I can't say we knew it would become the phenomenon it did," says Louis Castle, "but we were ready to push it, and the sequels, as far as we could. The mixture of a rich strategic game with the action of real-time decisions felt to all of us like a revolutionary idea for the



FMV cut-scenes drove the story.



TOP SCORES

LLO	4	395
LLO	5	313
LLOID	3	312
LLY	3	308
LLINSON	3	308
LLICK	2	192
LLOOOOO	1	180

TIME:	1H
LEADERSHIP:	18%
EFFICIENCY:	0%
TOTAL SCORE:	313
ENDING CREDITS:	0

CASUALTIES:	GDI: 88	NOD: 71	NEUTRAL: 0
BUILDINGS LOST:	GDI: 12	NOD: 1	NEUTRAL: 0

The sheer innovation, atmosphere and originality of *Command & Conquer* set it apart from any other strategy game of its time.

THE C&C FAMILY TREE

Each Westwood RTS has revolved around a central resource. Here we track the influence of each one



THE FUTURE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



C&C in 3D? It's about time too.

Real-time strategy games have moved on a heck of a lot since *Command & Conquer* first came around, but the principles are still the same – fit an exciting and believable scenario around an easy-to-understand micro-management oriented GUI (that's Graphic User Interface for non-techies). Of course, enhancements can always be made in the disciplines of AI and, ahem, basic unit pathfinding... No-one has yet got them completely right.

While Westwood Studios is undoubtedly the company best-placed to take the genre even further forward, it has been steadily losing ground to young upstarts such as Ensemble (*Age Of Empires*) and Blizzard (*Warcraft*). But with the recent announcement of new RTS title *C&C Generals*, Westwood has an opportunity to retake the high ground and we sincerely hope it does.

There are some incredible strategy games under construction: *Medieval: Total War*, *Age Of Mythology*, *Warcraft III*, *Sudden Strike 2*, not to mention rumoured sequels for the likes of *Battle Realms* and *Total Annihilation*. But it will always be C&C that commands the most attention, if only for the high regard in which the original game is held.

To say we are turning rabid in anticipation of this new C&C game would be an understatement – it looks and sounds that good. It's full 3D (something that Westwood has only recently embraced), it brings together some of the recognisable concepts from the C&C universe, and combines with them many other new ideas: air-to-air combat; a map editor and more of those amazing cinematics that have become a hallmark of the series.

C&C Generals could be the future of RTS gaming – let's hope it delivers.

from Westwood's past C&C titles; games like *Age Of Empires*, *Total Annihilation*, *Starcraft*... the list is almost endless.

But did this success make any of the developers rich? Joe Bostic thinks so, but not in the money sense: "I'm rich in experience of being a part of creating a genre that entertains millions of people to this day. I wasn't in it for the money, but I'm not poor, if that's what you mean."

Louis, Joe and Erik are all still working in the games biz at present, and are still trying to reach RTS nirvana almost 10 years after the first *Command & Conquer* game came into being, though – as Erik Yeo concludes – it's much harder now to release a blockbuster of C&C's magnitude.

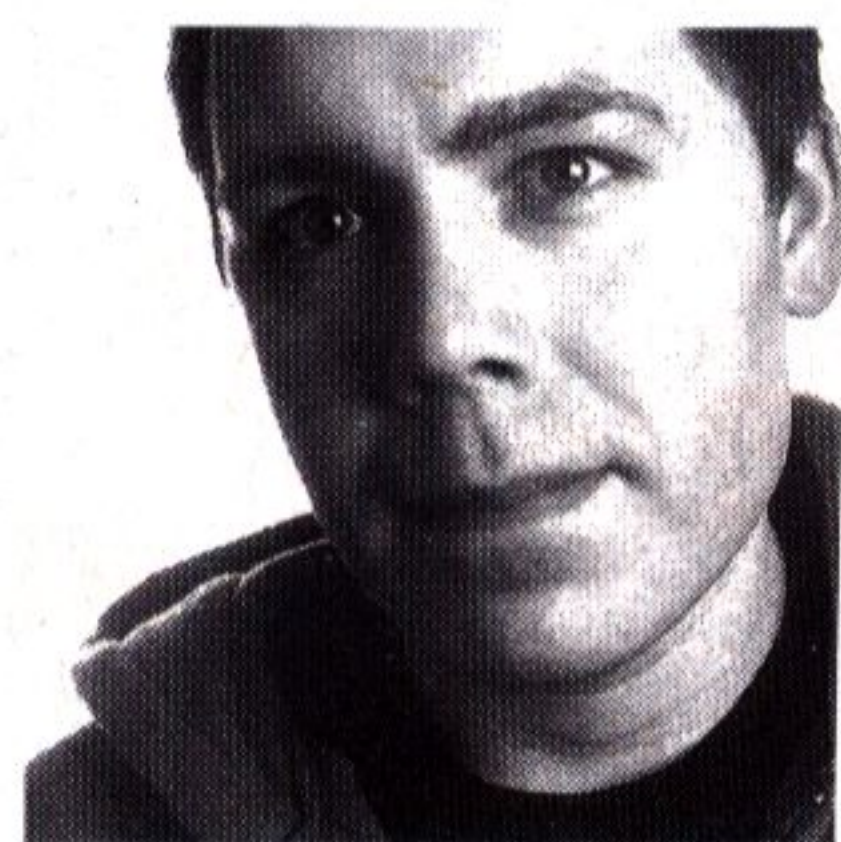
"The level of expectation has really changed," he says. "People always expect games to be fun, but for each

C&C or *Half-Life* or *Diablo* the expectation increases. People want the games to be everything the one before it was plus much more. Speaking as

a gamer, that's not unreasonable. However it makes development time and costs skyrocket."

Which is very true. Our expectations of new games have never been higher, and making good games has never been more expensive. That said: the RTS genre is still thriving, and that is all thanks to *Command & Conquer* – a real-time strategy game that changed the world in more ways than one.



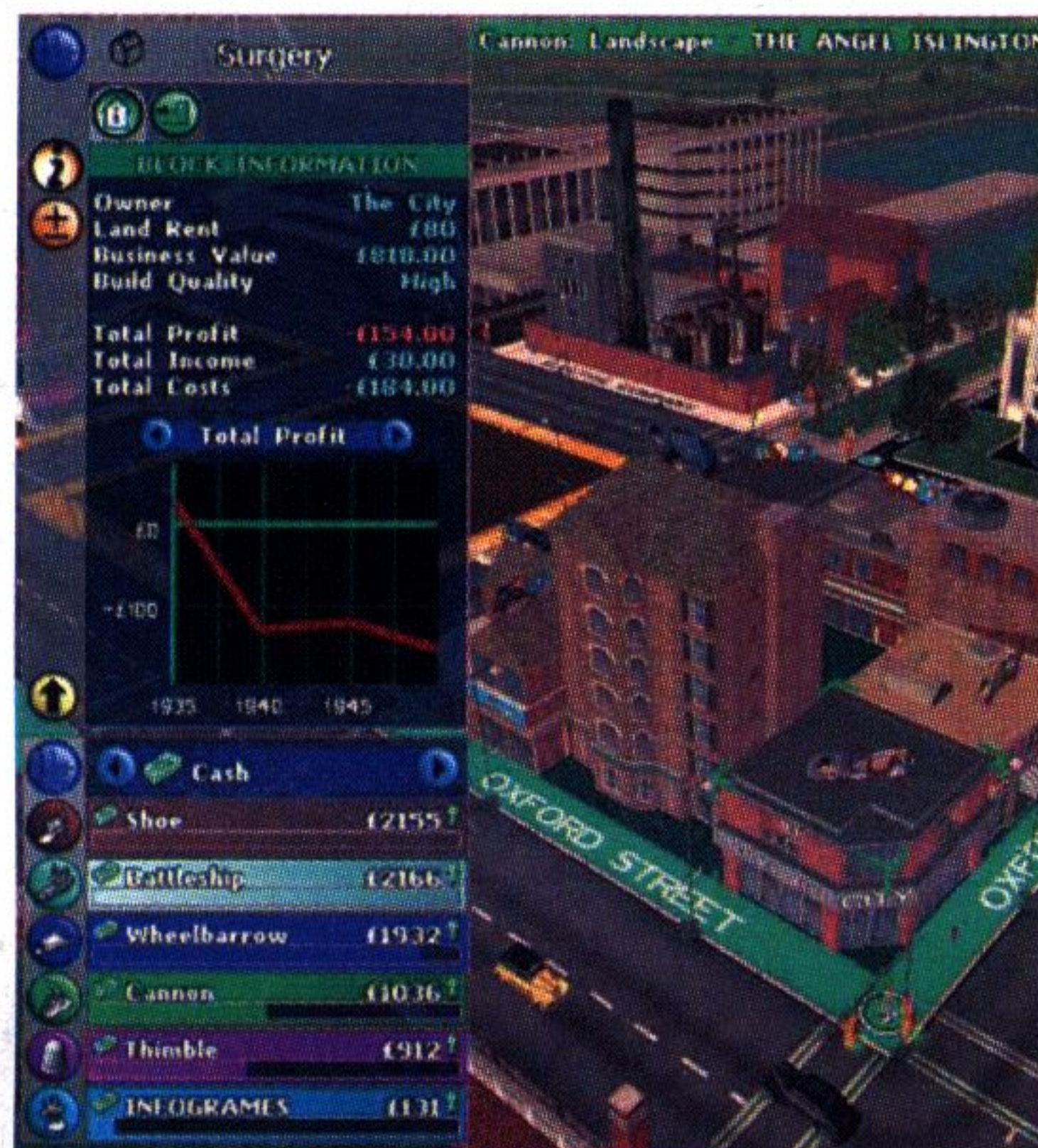


COMMENT

Put 'Tycoon' at the end of a game and it becomes immediately successful, argues **PC ZONE's** deputy editor **Richie Shoemaker-Tycoon**

"It's getting to the watered-down point where developers are running out of industries to Tycoonise"

IF I SEE ANOTHER so-called 'Tycoon' game on the shelves I think I may have to kill someone. I mean, it wasn't so bad with *Railroad Tycoon* or its brilliant *Rollercoaster* variant, but now things are getting out of hand. Someone has to pay. Not a week goes by when a new Tycoon game doesn't hit the shelf, each one a shameless rip-off of the last, and because the last was a shameless rip-off of the one before that, it's getting to the watered-down point where not only are developers running out of industries to Tycoonise, but you can pretty much guarantee the games are all bollocks anyway. Let's look at the most recent evidence: *Ski Resort Tycoon*, *Fast Food Tycoon*, *Pizza Tycoon*, *Car Tycoon* – all



Monopoly Tycoon: a rare gem

unrelenting muck. Case closed. Things have become so bad that developers are having to combine industries to make their game stand out, as was the case with the latest release to get my back up, *Trucks And Trains Tycoon*. When will it end? I'll tell you when – never. Give it a couple of years and you'll see 'Theme Concentration Camp' and 'Whorehouse Tycoon' jostling for the number 75 in the charts, mark my words.

Not that I'm arguing against such games ever appearing, at least not 'Whorehouse Tycoon' if it is a fun and well designed game with wobbly bits in. The thing is I know that will never be the case. No one owns the Tycoon brand name and consequently anyone can stick Tycoon on the box and hope it will sell. It all stems from the brilliant *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, but now it's once great name is being dragged through the mud by its countless piss-poor namesakes.

So why are these games so interminably awful and why are there so many of them, covering the same tired ground? Well because people buy them, some people actually like them, and because if a publisher doesn't release their Spoon Tycoon game first, someone else will. Just as the pop world has its Westlives, so the gaming world has its Tycoon games; endlessly banal and effortlessly cheap to produce, just change the cars for bars and you have

the exact same game, but slightly different. Ch-ching.

The trick is not to get dragged in. Just because you played and loved *Railroad Tycoon*, don't assume 'Sewerage Treatment Tycoon' is by the same developer and will be just as good. You are being tricked – know that and your problem will be solved.

Unfortunately the same can't be said of every bad game that hits the shelves, but by singling out the Tycoon games I think you'll find 90 per cent of the dross will have been filtered out. Unfortunately it works the other way as well. Recently we were sent a copy of *Moon Tycoon* for review. Having previously been released under the name *Luna*, it's hard not to think that the developers simply renamed it in order to incorporate the word 'Tycoon' in the title (in the hope it would help sell a few more copies), repackaged it and unleashed it on the unsuspecting public.

Maybe there is an unwritten law that by naming a game Tycoon, it automatically rips out the heart of a game and also helps it sell. Or perhaps we are just being cynical due to a run of poor-quality cash-ins. Yes that'll be it. However, just as having *Star Wars* before a game name is certain to help sell it, so too does putting Tycoon after it. Just don't blame us, we don't make the darned things after all. *Star Wars Tycoon* – now there's an idea. **PCZ**

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